FOOTBALL PICTURES. £100 IN PRIZES.

SHORT STORIES
A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 627. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 5TH, 1901. [ONE PENNY.

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Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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BIG PRIZE SCHEME FOR MARCH 1901.

25,602 PRIZES, value £10,000

LIST OF PRIZES!

1	Cash Prize	£50	£50 0
1	Cash Prize,	£40	40 0
10	Handsome Pianos, in walnut,	£40 each	400 0
5	Cash Prizes,	£25 each	125 0
10	Gents' Bicycles, Freewhee's,	£17 17s. each	178 10
10	Ladies' Bicycles, Free-wheels,	£17 17s. each	178 10
10	Cash Prizes,	£10 each	100 0
20	Jones's Sewing Machines,	£8 each	160 0
20	Cash Prizes,	£5 each	100 0
50	Rolled Gold Lever Watches,	£2 10s. each	125 0
100	Cash Prizes,	£2 each	200 0
50	Dinner Services (58 pieces),	£2 each	100 0
50	Folding Bed Chairs,	£2 each	100 0
50	Ladies' Travelling Trunks,	£2 each	100 0
200	Cash Prizes,	£1 each	200 0
200	Ladies' Leather Hatboxes,	£1 each	200 0
100	Basket Arm Chairs, upholstered,	£1 each	100 0
400	pairs Blankets,	15s. per pair	300 0
200	½-doz Electro-plated Forks, large,	15s. per ½-doz.	150 0
200	½-doz. Electro-plated Forks, small,	15s. per ½-doz.	£150 0
500	Ladies' Umbrellas,	15/- ea.	375 0
500	Gents' Umbrellas,	15s. each	375 0
400	Best Electro-plated Teapots,	15s. each	300 0
400	Handsome Meat Carvers, with Steel in Case,	15s. set	300 0
1000	Cash Prizes,	10s. each	500 0
1000	pairs Bed Sheets	10s. each	500 0
1000	White Linen Table Cloths,	10s. each	500 0
1000	Ladies' Umbrellas,	7/6 each	375 0
1000	Ladies' Leather Purses,	7/6 each	375 0
200	½-doz. Table Knives,	7/6 per ½-doz.	75 0
200	½-doz. Dessert do.,	7/6 per ½-doz.	75 0
2000	Ladies' Dress Lengths, Navy Blue Serge,	7/6 each	750 0
2000	Cash Prizes of	5s. each	500 0
4715	Ladies' Leather Handbags,	4s. each	943 0
4000	½-doz. Fine Linen Cambric Handkerchiefs,	2/6 per ½-doz.	500 0
4000	Handsome Work-boxes,	2/6 each	500 0
25,602			£10,000 0

CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.

The Tablets of **Watson's Matchless Cleanser** and of **Nubolic Soap** are enclosed in distinctive Wrapper. The prizes will be awarded in the above order to persons who send the highest number of Wrappers of either soap or both of them to **Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds,** not later than MARCH 31ST, 1901. Each wrapper must be complete, and each package of the wrappers sent will be taken as one lot. Separate entries must be sent under separate covers. Full postage or carriage must be Paid. Each parcel must contain the full name and address of sender, and the number of Wrappers sent in must be marked on the same paper. On outside of parcel write lexibly "**Prize Competition.**" A list, giving result of the Competition, will be sent with each prize when it is sent out. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employee of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited will be eligible. All prizes will be despatched about April 25th.

WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER
The Best Soap for all purposes. Saves Health, Strength, and Wealth. Washes clothes with ease, Leaves them sweet and pure. Does not injure the most delicate fabric. **Largest sale of 1-lb. Tablets in the World.**

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A PURE & PERFECT DISINFECTANT.
War s off Disease.
Saves Doctors' Bills. For Kitchen, Laundry, Bathroom, or Nursery.

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WARNING. *Instead of using the common White Headache Powders, which generally consist entirely of a crude drug, which has been condemned as dangerous by the medical papers, insist on having a bona-fide anti-quack remedy, recommended by such eminent medical authorities as Dr. RAMAGE, L.R.C.P., Dr. THURSTIN, L.R.C.P., late Dr. BOYD-WILLIAMS (Liverpool), the Editor of the Medical Journal, "Health," etc., etc. The name of this safe remedy is KAPUTINE.*

ALL LEADING CHEMISTS SELL IT, OR CAN GET IT FOR YOU IN A FEW HOURS.

Sold by BOOT'S, TAYLOR'S, DAY'S, WHITE'S and other Stores. Most Co-operative Stores sell it.

PACKETS, 1/-. SAMPLES ONE PENNY,

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1s. 6d.
Sent Post Free in plain package, twenty one stamps.

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FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

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SHORT STORIES

No. 627.] For the Week Ending January 5th, 1901. [One Penny.

FOR HIGH STAKES.

A cloudless June sky above, a dusty California moutain road, and a young tenderfoot from Ohio, mounted on a stout broncho, with an outfit consisting of a roll of blankets and a six-shooter.

Fired with visions of suddenly acquired wealth, I had a few weeks before started for California, sorely against the wishes of my parents and advice of my friends.

I was riding slowly up the long mountain grade, headed for the gravel mines of the North Fork of Yuba, and calculated to make the Mountain House by dark, when I was overtaken by a horseman, who rode up beside me with a genial "How are you, stranger?"

He was a fine-looking man of about thirty, with a blonde beard, and the handsome horse he bestrode was somewhat jaded. We rode on together up the grade, and fell into conversation.

He inquired where I was from, and where I was bound for, both of which questions I answered frankly. He told me that he was a mine-owner on the Middle Fork; that he had just made a business trip down the ridge, and was in a hurry to get back, and added that I had better come on with him and he would give me a job. I gratefully accepted his offer, and when we stopped to water about half-way up the grade, he asked me to carry a small pair of saddle-bags, as his horse was pretty well beat.

I complied cheerfully, as my beast was comparatively fresh. The bags were heavy, and he remarked as he handed them over that they contained the coin from his last clean up. With a due appreciation of the importance of the trust, I felt for my six-shooter, and we pushed on up the grade. Arrived at the top he took a cross road, remarking that he guessed we could make old man Brown's by night.

I found him a pleasant, entertaining fellow, and being no doubt conceited, imagined that he found me the same. It was nearly dark when we rode up to a low, rambling, old building, which he designated as "old man Brown's," and added that it was rather a hard place, but any port in a storm.

As we rode up to the porch a slender girl of about fourteen with big brown eyes and a shock of red curls, came running round the corner of the house. She looked as wild as a deer, and my first thought was, "What a beauty she will make some day!" I raised my sombrero, and asked if we could get accommodation for the night.

"Dunno; I'll ask dad," she said shortly, and darted into the house through the bar-room.

A moment later a portly old man in list slippers made his appearance, rubbing his hands and smiling benignly.

"How are you, boys? Want to stop? All right. Here, Jess, call Joe to take the horses."

I had just dismounted, and started to remove the saddle-bags, when a glance at my travelling companion checked me. He was gazing back down the road, and listening intently. I saw a greyish pallor overspread his face. The next moment he struck spurs into his horse, and without a word galloped down the road in the opposite direction, into the gathering darkness.

Glancing back, I saw a number of horsemen riding furiously down upon me.

Surprised and alarmed, I sprang again into the saddle, and as the sound of horses approaching at a rapid rate came to my ears, I started on down the road after my late companion. My first thought was that highwaymen were on our track.

Glancing back, I saw a number of horsemen riding furiously down upon me. I heard loud oaths and orders to halt. Without heeding them, I spurred on, and drew my six-shooter, determined to sell my life as dearly as possible. The next moment a volley of shots rang out, and my horse stumbled and fell.

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Before I could rise, I was surrounded by the roughest-looking crowd of men it has ever been my misfortune to encounter. Cries of "Kill him!" "Shoot him!" "Hang him!" were heard on all sides, and a dozen hands seized me in no gentle grasp. My horse lay dead. One of the men thrust his hand into the saddle-bags, and pulled out a sack of coin.

"Here you are, boys! Here's the swag! Hang the blanked thief!" he shouted.

"Let's take him over to Brown's, and hear what he's got to say," said a tall man, who seemed to be leader.

This proposition met with general disfavour, especially from one officious man, who took a rawhide lariat from his saddle, and leading the way to a spreading oak tree that stood near, exclaimed:

"Here's a good limb! Fetch him along, boys!"

But the tall man demurred, and had his way.

"If he can't give a straight account of himself, we'll make short work of him."

I attempted to explain, but a pistol was held at my head with the peremptory command to shut up. My arms were then securely bound with the lariat. I was marched back to Brown's, and placed in one corner of the bar-room.

The crowd then demanded liquid refreshment, which was served by Brown. The girl Jess stood in the doorway looking at me curiously, and I thought rather pityingly.

My trial then began. It was brief and to the point.

The stage had been robbed the day before, the express messenger killed, and several thousand dollars stolen. The robbers, supposed to be two in number, had escaped, and these men had organised a party to hunt them down. Had tracked them thus far, and succeeded in capturing me, with part of the stolen money in my possession.

Brown testified to our riding up a few minutes before they came, and asking leave to stop overnight; and added, with a solemn shake of his head, that they had "let the worst one get away."

They then demanded to know what I had to say, and I told my story in as straightforward a manner as possible. It was listened to incredulously by most of them; but among a few I thought I saw looks that encouraged me, and I wound up with an impromptu appeal for life and liberty which I felt must touch them.

I was doomed to bitter disappointment when the lank man, who had "Missouri" written in every lineament, and who had been so officiously anxious to hang me at once, arose, and after expectorating, remarked, with a harsh laugh:

"Young feller, you can't come it over us that-a-way. Come on, boys! Let's string him up."

Several rose, and with oaths loud and deep seconded the motion. My blood ran cold, as I realised my imminent peril. These rough miners, who certainly had strong circumstantial evidence against me, felt perfectly justified in hanging me to the nearest tree. What could I do? I gazed from one to the other like a hunted animal.

"Surely you would not hang a man on such evidence as this?" I cried. "If you will untie me, I can show you letters that will prove who I am."

The tall man, whom they called Joe, stepped up and untied me. I drew out a letter from my mother which I had received while in San Francisco. It contained a card photograph of my pretty sister Alice, which fell to the floor as I drew out the letter. Joe picked it up.

'It is my sister's picture," I cried. "Here; read the letter, any of you. It will prove that I am an honest man."

Joe was gazing earnestly at the picture.

"Tell you what, boys, this here's a little beauty!"

In my heart I blessed her pretty face, and only wished her there to plead for me in person.

The picture was passed round, and hope sprang up in my heart, when the old Missourian, who seemed thirsting for my gore, dashed it down again by exclaiming:

"How do ye know but what he stole that letter and picter from someone on the stage, or out of the mail bag? It's all bosh! Let's hang him and done with it!"

Joe took the photo again, and glanced from it to me.

"Now, look'ee here, Mizzoo—seems to me yer a-gittin' cold-blooded in yer old age. Anybody with half an eye can see that this gal looks like him."

I thanked Heaven for the resemblance, which was slight, and began to hope again. The girl Jess crowded in among the men, and asked to see the picture. Joe handed it to her, jocosely remarking that he'd marry her when she got to be as handsome as that.

She quietly replied:

"Shut yer mouth," and gazed intently on the picture.

"I'll bet that's his sister," she said presently.

"I'm inclined to think so myself," said Joe. "I think we'd better wait, boys, and take him down to the bar."

At this there was a dissenting murmur, which grew so strong that my courage failed again. Suddenly Joe turned to the crowd, and cried:

"Tell ye what, boys. Let's lay it on to luck. I'll play him a straight game of freeze-out. If he loses, he's our meat. What do ye say?"

The idea seemed to tickle the fancy of the crowd. They evidently had confidence in Joe's ability to play poker. Unfortunately for me it was a game of which I knew nothing, and I told them so.

The girl Jess was still standing beside Joe.

"Let me play for him," she said eagerly. "Luck's always with me."

"Yes! Let her play," cried the men, evidently amused at the novelty of the thing, and also sure that Joe's superior skill would win. "Let Jess play for him. Can you stake her, young feller?"

I looked at the girl curiously. Her big dark eyes were glittering with excitement, but she was cool and self-possessed. Taking out my purse, which contained my wealth, about one hundred dollars, I handed it to her.

The cards were produced, and in a few moments she and Joe were seated opposite each other, and the game began.

It was a weird scene; and I had the odd feeling that I was simply a spectator, and in no way concerned. I remember wishing for sketching materials, that I might transfer it to canvas. What a picture it would make. The low-ceiled, uninviting room; the smoky lamps shedding a flickering light upon the eager group round the table. I could see the face of the young girl, and knew that in all probability my life hung upon her "luck."

She played in silence, except to indicate how many cards she wanted at the draw. It was an even game for a while, then Joe began to win, and her pile of coin gradually diminished. She played coolly on, despite the comments of the crowd.

She was down to her last dollar when the tide turned in her favour. She won steadily, raking in the coin each time, till Joe was nearly broke. He began to bet cautiously, having evidently no desire to be beaten by a girl.

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I watched her face closely for some sign of excitement, but none was visible. She was thoroughly self-possessed, and the fact that she held my life in her hands had no outward effect upon her. Luck turned in Joe's favour again, and they were soon about even. The crowd grew impatient.

"What 're ye afraid of, Joe? Where's yer nerve? Why don't yer bet?" and like expressions were heard, while others encouraged the girl. "Old man Brown" came round and patted her on the shoulder, remarking that "Jess always did have the dog-on-dest luck."

They made it a jack pot, and it was Joe's deal. Jess opened it for ten dollars and discarded two. Joe also discarded two, and after the draw gave a short laugh and raised her ten. She glanced at her coin in an uncertain way, then at her hand. She had three dollars less than he. The excitement was intense. For a moment only the heavy breathing could be heard. Then Jess laughed a little and pushed her last dollar into the pot.

He struck the table a blow that made the money jingle.

Old "Mizzoo" broke into a discordant laugh.

"Jess don't bluff worth a cent!" he cried.

Joe calmly pushed in the rest of his money.

"It'll be make or break this time,' he said, glancing over at me. "Sorry fer ye, young feller. Boys, git yer rope. What ye got, Jess?"

She quietly laid down four nines and the jack of hearts. He held three aces and a pair of eights. He struck the table a blow that made the money jingle.

"Good girl! Luck's on your side. I'd 'a' staked my last cent on a full like that, but yours are too much fer me. Come on, boys! Let's irrigate."

He led the way to the bar, followed by the crowd, now seemingly in the best of humours. Jess calmly raked in the pot, put the money in my purse and handed it to me, remarking laconically:

"Here; you'd better take this and git."

"I don't want it all," I exclaimed. "Only what I put in."

"Keep it all. It's yours. They've killed your horse," and before I could say anything more she left the room.

My first impulse was to put as much distance as possible between myself and the crowd, but on second thoughts I reflected that there was no other house within several miles, that I knew nothing of the country, and if I started out on foot I was liable to be run down by another gang of robber hunters. I therefore put on a bold front and asked Brown to give me a lodging for the night.

He picked up a guttering candle, called Jess, and told her to show me up to the "corral." This was a big loft over the bar-room, in which there were a dozen or more uninviting-looking beds.

She placed the candle on a box beside one of these and was about to leave the room, when I detained her.

"Miss Jessie, I have not yet thanked you for what you have done for me to-night. My life is not worth much but I should have hated to have given it up in such a manner. Is there nothing I can do to show my gratitude?"

She laughed in an embarrassed manner.

"Why, it wasn't anything. I like to play! I'd 'a' done it for anybody."

"I'm sure of that; but is there nothing I can do for you?"

She hesitated a moment.

"Would you mind giving me that picture?"

"What! My sister's? No, indeed; you can have it and welcome. She is one of the sweetest girls on earth, and would be only too glad to do what she could for anyone who is kind to me."

She took it and thanked me.

"I thought I'd like to look at it. I'm much obliged. Good-night."

I did not see her about the house next morning. All the participants in the wished-for necktie party of the night before had vanished. I saw nothing of the saddle-bags, so concluded they had taken them.

I inquired for Miss Jessie, and was told that she had gone off early to drive up some cattle on the "divide." The Chinese cook provided me with a scanty breakfast, and when the stage came by I mounted it with a feeling of inexpressible relief.

Half-an-hour later, as we rounded a curve in the road, we came face to face with Jess. She was mounted on a vicious-looking, black mustang, and galloped rapidly past, her bright curls streaming in the wind. I had only time to raise my hat in response to a smile of recognition, when she passed, as I then thought, out of my life for ever.

* * * * *

I had been in the mines but a short time when I received the sad news of my father's death, accompanied by an urgent request from my mother that I return home at once and take charge of his business affairs. This was incumbent upon me, as I was an only son.

So within three months of the time of my arrival in California, I was in London again, my gold-hunting fever slightly abated, but still hoping to return to the Pacific Coast; but circumstances combined to prevent it.

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Without being obtrusive, I kept them in sight.

Alice welcomed me with open arms. She was intensely interested in my California experience, and wished very much to write to Jessie and thank her for liberating me from my dangerous situation; but as I did not know her address, she had to abandon the idea.

She died the second year after I returned, leaving only my mother and myself. As she was averse to leaving the old home, I remained there until her death, some twelve years later. Then finding life intolerably monotonous, I arranged my business, in which I had been very successful, so that I could leave for an indefinite time.

I felt a strong desire to revisit the scenes of my early California experience, and in due time found myself at Peak City. Much of its former glory had departed. The closing of the hydraulic mines had caused quite an exodus from that region. I decided to make the mountain trip on horseback as of yore, so hired a good one from the only livery-stable in the town, and one bright June morning started again over the almost forgotten mountain grades.

About two o'clock I overtook a heavily-laden waggon, drawn by six powerful horses. The sun's rays were uncomfortably warm, the road was dusty. Just ahead was the watering trough, where the stranger overtook me so long ago.

The driver of the team ahead was a stalwart six-footer. He wore a blonde beard and a slouch hat, and walked beside the wheelers. He had a black snake looped about his shoulders, and every now and then spoke encouragingly to the straining animals. As we reached the trough, I drew rein beside him. He eased the horses back from a heavy pull, and answered my salutation pleasantly. Something in the man's face struck me as familiar.

He watered his team, then climbed upon the waggon-box, produced a flask, and invited me to "smile" with him. I returned the compliment with a cigar, and we entered into conversation.

I inquired if he knew what had become of the old man Brown, who kept a stopping-place over on the divide years ago.

He looked at me keenly for a moment.

"Oh, yes. The old buzzard kicked the bucket some time ago. Struck a good mine and couldn't stand prosperity. What's become of the girl? Blanked if I know. Took her down to 'Frisco, and put her to school. Seems to me I did hear she married Tom Stewart, Brown's old partner, but he's gone up the flue, too, I hear. Old place is gone to rack; nobody lives there now. Good stopping-place about a mile the other side, though. Stan' up, Bell!"

The handsome grey mare in the "off lead" arched her neck, the other horses tossed their heads and straightened their traces, the black snake gave a resounding crack in close proximity to the big near wheeler's heels, and the waggon moved on up the mountain side.

I rode on ahead no longer puzzled as to where I had met the stalwart driver, for memory straightway carried me back to my acquaintance of fourteen years before, who had so unceremoniously deserted me that memorable night at old man Brown's. He had changed but little while I, who was but a boy then, was now bearded and bronzed, and had no fear of being recognised.

I rode on, musing on the ups and downs of life, and presently reached the cross-road. I found the old hostelry a heap of ruins, the roof having been crushed in some previous winter by the weight of snow.

I unsaddled my horse and allowed him to graze for a time, while I wondered as to the whereabouts of the red-haired lassie, who had played such a fearless game that night, and reflected that by this time she was probably playing faro in some of the underground palaces of San Francisco.

After drifting aimlessly round among the mining towns of the Sierras for some weeks, I went to San Francisco, and I spent some time in noting the changes time had wrought in that queenly city by the sea.

One day, while strolling on the beach by the Cliff House, I came face to face with a beautiful woman who both interested and puzzled me. She was tall and well formed, with fine brown eyes, and a heavy coil of dark auburn hair. She was dressed in black, plainly, but with distinction, and had every indication of wealth and refinement. She was accompanied by an elderly woman, whom I heard her address as "auntie." I managed to pass and repass them several times, and fancied the brown eyes glanced at me rather interestedly.

Without being obtrusive, I kept them in sight, and returned to the city on the same tram. I secured a seat just behind them, and devoted myself to studying her every detail of dress and manner.

Arrived at the terminus, they entered a cab, and were driven away, and I returned to the hotel, more interested than I cared to confess.

For years I had been so devoted to my mother, and to business, that no thought of marriage had seriously entered my mind. Now I suddenly realised that grey hairs were creeping among the black, and, if I ever intended to marry, it was high time I gave the matter my attention. How much the thought of a pair of brown eyes had to do with this resolution, I cannot say.

For several days I wandered round the various places

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of amusement and interest, with a vague hope of meeting her again.

One evening I strolled into the Opera House, and stood near the door, where I could observe all who entered. My patience was rewarded, for the two ladies came in just before the curtain rose. As she passed me I fancied I saw again a look of interest in her eyes. I procured a seat as near her as possible and watched her all the evening, failing more hopelessly in love each moment, and this without knowing if she were married or single.

At the close of the performance I managed to keep very near them. As they passed me my brown-eyed beauty dropped her fan. I sprang forward, picked it up, and presented it with the most graceful bow at my command. She thanked me most graciously, passed on, and entered a carriage, leaving me in a state of bliss bordering upon imbecility.

A week passed without my seeing her, although I haunted the principal thoroughfares by day and the theatres by night.

I was beginning to despair, when, in strolling through the conservatory at Golden Gate Park one day, I again met her accompanied by the same elderly lady. They were examining some rare orchids. When her eyes met mine, I distinctly saw a pink flush steal over her lovely face, and fancied I saw a smile in the brown eyes, but she bent over a flower, and I passed on, mentally reviling my luck at my inability to obtain an introduction.

They soon passed out and took a shady seat in the park. I sat down as near as possible, without being obtrusive, and, taking out a paper, pretended to read. In reality I watched her over the top.

Presently they rose and passed on, and I saw, with a thrill of delight, that my divinity had left her purse on the seat.

Instantly a spirit of covetousness took possession of me. I must have that purse at all hazards. I immediately arose and appropriated it, dreading lest I should be seen, and passed into another part of the park, feeling delightfully guilty.

Arrived at a place free from observation, I examined my treasure. It contained a twenty-dollar gold piece, some silver, and a few cards and memoranda. On one of the cards was written a name and address, "Jessie E. Stewart, No. 231 Mason Street."

I felt elated. I had heard her companion address her as Jessie, that day in the conservatory. I determined to wait till the next day, call at the address, and return the property.

In the next morning's paper I saw an advertisement of the lost purse, with the request that the finder would return it to the same address as that on the card and receive a reward.

I wondered if I should receive the reward I so much desired—an acquaintance with her—and determined to return it that morning.

About ten I rang the bell of a pretty house, in the prettiest residential portion of the city.

A neat servant maid answered my ring. I asked for the lady who had advertised the lost purse.

"Oh, yes," said she. "Step into the library. She will be down in a moment."

She ushered me into a lovely little room, and ran upstairs, leaving me staring stupidly at a life-sized portrait of my sister Alice, which hung on the opposite wall.

In an instant it all flashed across me. The resemblance to some one I had met puzzled me no longer.

I saw, as in a dream, the low-ceiled room in the old house in the Sierras, the rough faces of the miners, the eager eyes of the young girl as she sat there playing for my life.

As I gazed at the picture a light step sounded behind me, and turning I stood before the woman I had been following for weeks, to find in her the heroine of my early California experience.

She laughed musically and held out her hand.

"Ah, Mr. Elliott, I see you recognise me through your sister's portrait. Now, my memory is far better than yours, for I recognised you the day I saw you by the Cliff House. Have I, then, changed so very much since that night? Let me see, it was fourteen years ago, was it not?"

I seized both her hands in an impulsive clasp. Though I remembered her as

> A thin slip of a girl like a new moon,
> Sure to be rounded into beauty soon,

I had no idea she would develop into such a beautiful woman as this.

"Changed? Yes. You have changed very much, but it is strange I did not recognise you. I ought to have done so."

"There is nothing strange about it. I have changed very much—for the better, I hope. I have had a strange story. Sit down and let me tell it to you."

I did so most willingly, and and she went on:

"In the first place, I am not old man Brown's daughter. I know nothing of my parents, except that both died of yellow fever in New Orleans, when I was a baby. Mr. and Mrs. Brown adopted me and brought me to California. They built that house, and I was brought up there, with no 'advantages' except to lay up an abundant supply of health. I was as wild as a hawk, and almost as fierce, I think.

I stood before the woman I had been following for weeks.

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I caught her in my arms, claiming my reward.

"When I was ten years old, Mother Brown died. After that I ran completely wild. Father was always good to me, but always let me have my own way to a shocking extent.

"The year after you were there, Father Brown had the luck to strike rich gravel in land that he owned. He took in a partner, Mr. Stewart, and at once brought me down here and put me to school. What a time I did have at first! I was like a caged hawk. I know I gave my poor teachers no end of trouble, but they were kind, and I soon began to take interest. Besides, I always kept that picture you gave me, and I know the sight of her sweet face somehow kept my feet in the path of duty. I became very much attached to one of my teachers, Miss Rose. She is the one with whom you have seen me.

"Father Brown died the year after I was put in school, leaving me in care of his partner, Mr. Stewart. When I was old enough to leave school, I had no home, so Mr. Stewart kindly got me out of that difficulty by marrying me.

"He was very kind to me, and I missed him greatly when he died. I induced Miss Rose to make her home with me, and she has been with me ever since. We travelled a great deal for some years, and have not been here very long. I have often thought that I should meet you again. The picture you gave me has been a great comfort to me. When I grew restless and discouraged at school, I always fancied her sweet eyes looked at me reproachfully, and when I had won an unusually hard battle with myself, I seemed to read commendation in them. I had it enlarged, as you see, and you don't know what a comfort it has been to me."

She insisted that I should stay to lunch, and brought Miss Rose in to entertain me while she superintended the same. When I finally left, it was with a promise to call the next evening.

Of course I did so, and found her more charming than ever. Before long it seemed that I only lived from one time of seeing her till the next.

One night I escorted them to the opera. When we returned it was late, but Jessie, as I always called her to myself, insisted that I should come in.

She had been unusually full of spirits that evening, and her gay laughter and sallies of wit had completely enthralled me. Miss Rose said good-night, and discreetly left us at the library door.

I had a "now or never" feeling, that caused a peculiar sensation to perambulate up and down my spine. I thought the darkness of the room would be a favourable opportunity, but before I could take the slightest advantage of the situation, she turned a flood of gaslight upon the scene, and gave me a tantalizing look that was too much for even my cowardice, and the next moment I had her in my arms, urging my suit with all my ardour.

But she was obdurate. She broke away from my detaining clasp, and tossing her wrap upon a chair, cried gleefully:

"So you say you love me. Very well, we will let fate decide it. I won you once, fair and square, now see if you can win me. We will play a straight game, just as we did that night long ago, only you shall take Joe's place. If you win, I am yours. If not, I remain single."

She produced a pack of cards and box of chips, seated herself at a small table, and motioned me to the opposite seat. There was nothing for it but to obey. She divided the chips, and at a motion from me dealt.

I had an odd feeling that she would keep her word, and abide by the decision of the cards. We played in silence for awhile she getting the best of the game.

I began to bet recklessly, in hopes of retrieving my waning fortunes, but luck was steadily against me.

I fancied I saw a disconcerted look in her eyes when she saw my pile reduced to five. I took heart at this and began to win. We were soon nearly even, when an idea took possession of me.

On the next deal I drew but one card. She took three and the betting began. I went slowly at first but with a confident air that deceived her.

I raised her till she had but three chips left. I calmly pushed in three.

She hesitated a moment, then threw down the cards, "Take it!" she said.

I quietly gathered in the chips, putting my bobtailed flush out of sight, and saw as I gathered up the cards, that she had jacks and trays.

With such odds in my favour, I began to be very hopeful. I dealt, each drew two. She quietly laid down her last chip, and I called her.

She had three queens and a pair of eights. I threw down four trays, and caught her in my arms, claiming my reward. She granted it, fully and freely, but I never told her what a bluff I played.

E. A. T.

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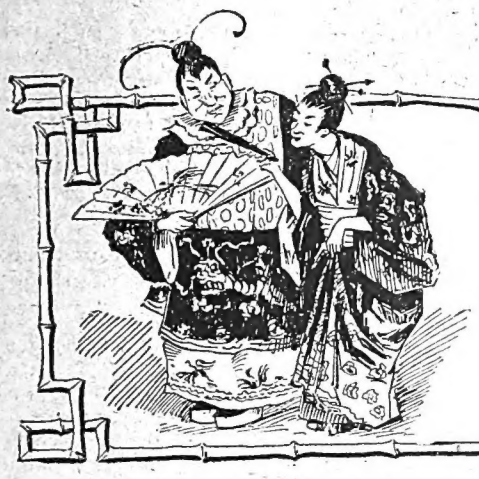

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

XXXIII.—HE BUYS A FIRE EXTINGUISHER AND PROCEEDS TO EXTINGUISH.

JUST as the Bowsers had finished dinner the other evening a van drove up with a parcel, and as it was brought in Mrs. Bowser looked at it and turned round for an explanation. Mr. Bowser didn't give one until they got upstairs; then he assumed a look of superior wisdom and began:

"Do you know the money value of the property annually destroyed by fire in the United Kingdom?"

"It must be quite large," replied Mrs. Bowser.

"It amounts to millions of pounds, my dear woman. Not only that, but at least a thousand lives are sacrificed to the fire fiend every year. Business is interrupted and ruined, homes made desolate, wives made widows and children made orphans by the devouring element. You should read up the statistics. They will furnish you more food for reflection than a hundred novels."

"Have you posted yourself well up in them?" she asked, with a tartness in her tones.

"Certainly I have. You don't imagine I am talking through the top of my head, do you? It was my duty to post myself, and I know all about it. There were just 11,329 fires in the country last year, and the loss was exactly £23,451,812 19s. 2½d. The point I wish to emphasize is that of these 11,329 fires 9,288 were due to carelessness."

"How carelessness?"

"The carelessness of women and children mostly. Every time you heat your curling-irons you may set fire to the house. The cook's carelessness may start a fire in the kitchen. You light the gas and drop a match. The cook flings matches about where the rats can get at them. At any hour of the day or night your absent-mindedness may reduce this home to ashes."

"And how about your leaving lighted cigar-ends about?" asked Mrs. Bowser. "You have burnt three holes in this carpet, spoilt the piano cover, set the curtains on fire, and done other damage."

"I am talking statistics."

"Woman, I am talking statistics!" shouted Mr. Bowser as he turned on her with such majestic dignity that the cat wondered if she had ever met him before. "Passing over the fact that you and the cook and even this silly old cat are liable to set this house on fire any day in the year, let me say that if people had been prepared for fires there would not have been half the loss of property given in the statistics. While I can't watch over you from hour to hour, I can in a measure guard against your carelessness by being prepared to nip the conflagration in the bud."

"Then that package downstairs is a conflagration nipper?" she asked.

"Don't try to be funny, woman. This is a matter not only of pounds, shillings and pence, but of life and death, and I want it treated seriously. That package down in the hall is a fire extinguisher. You may at some time or other have heard of one, the same as you have heard of a hammer or a thrashing machine."

"Yes; I have heard of them."

"It is to extinguish incipient conflagration. For instance, I awake at midnight and smell smoke. I jump out of bed and come down here to find a fire just starting in that cupboard—a fire due to your carelessness. Left to itself for five minutes more, and away would go the house and our lives, but by means of the extinguisher I extinguish."

"Which is very kind of you," she observed.

"Still trying to be funny, are you? The object is to provoke me, but it will fail. I have not yet purchased the extinguisher, but have brought it home to test it. I want you to learn how to handle it, so that you may be prepared in my absence. It will also be well for the cook to know how."

"Are you going to set the house on fire in order to put it out?"

"No, madam; I'm not. I am going to set fire to a pile of newspapers

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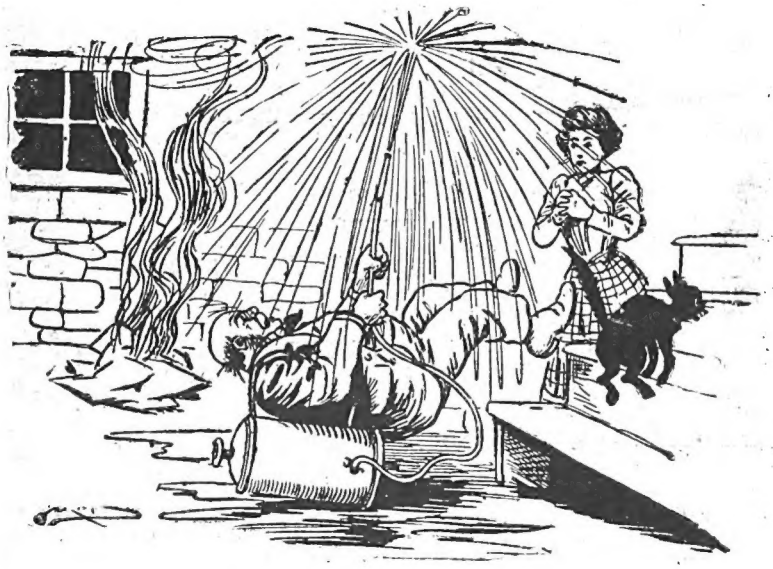

He rolled over and over to the cellar bottom.

on the cement floor of the cellar and then show you how to douse the flames out. There will be some little smoke, but that can go out of the windows."

Mrs. Bowser felt certain that some disaster would happen if anything of the sort were attempted, but it was either give in or have a row, and she gave in. The cook felt the same way, but she wanted to keep her place for the winter.

Before going down into the cellar, Mr. Bowser unwrapped the extinguisher and explained what it was charged with and how it worked. He also gave a brief history of the great fire of London which might have been prevented by a cool man and an extinguisher.

Then the trio proceeded down into the cellar, and he heaped up a lot of old newspapers and gave a history of the conflagration at the Paris Bazaar which could also have been checked in its infancy by one squirt from a squirter.

"Now, then," he continued as he opened the cellar windows and got ready to strike a match, "we will make this scene as realistic as possible. It is midnight. I awake to smell smoke and hear the faint crackling of the destructive flames. I bound out of bed without saying anything to Mrs. Bowser, and as I come downstairs I find the cellar ablaze. It is from the cook's carelessness as she brought up coal for the morning. I seize the extinguisher and come dashing down, and, though it appears as if no human power can stay the conflagration, I tackle it and have it out in twenty seconds. I will now light the papers and show you how the thing works."

As the papers were alight he rushed upstairs after the extinguisher. A minute later he reappeared with it strapped to his back and the nozzle in his hand.

He had meant to keep very cool and do the thing beautifully, but he grew excited over it, and as he was met by a volume of smoke he lost his head and footing at the same time.

With a whoop and a yell he fell forward down stairs and rolled over and over to the cellar bottom. As he rolled the extinguisher tried to extinguish, but instead of the stream striking the flames it played on Mr. Bowser's head and feet and body, on the ceiling above and the walls around, on the women who tried to rush forward and help him up.

The pile of papers blazed, and the smoke poured out of the windows, and it wasn't thirty seconds before some one was pounding at the front door and yelling "Fire!"

Mrs. Bowser and the cook dodged the fire and the extinguisher and fled upstairs, but it was too late. A score of people came crowding in as soon as the door was opened, and without asking questions they dived down into the kitchen and snatched up anything that would hold water.

Mr. Bowser had got up by this time and had gained control of the squirter, but he couldn't get upstairs for the people who were throwing down water. As he yelled and shouted and raved an engine came rattling up, a hose nozzle was thrust into an open window, and during the next five minutes three hundred barrels of ice cold water gushed into the cellar.

Everything, including Mr. Bowser, was afloat and soaked and chilled to the marrow when Mrs. Bowser finally made the over-zealous populace understand the situation.

Then Mr. Bowser was hauled out of the window by a fireman, and while Mrs. Bowser and the cat stood on the steps above and the populace crowded round, the fireman held the fire statistician up against the wall and called him seventeen kinds of a fool and added that he ought to be drowned like a rat in a tub.

Five minutes later Mr. Bowser stood in his own front hall, with the door shut after him, and the crowd dispersed. He was soaked and limp and smoke-begrimed and half-scared to death, but he remembered his dignity.

"Well, the incipient conflagration has been extinguished," observed Mrs. Bowser as she looked him over.

"It is extinguished!" he hoarsely replied. "Yes, woman, the incipient conflagration has not only been extinguished, but you have been extinguished with it!"

"Then it was all my fault, was it?"

"A put up job on me from start to finish. Woman, I go upstairs to change my clothes. Do not follow me to offer explanations or assistance or to finish your work by stabbing me in the back! I know you at last—at last—and—and—"

And he pulled himself up step by step, and he halted on every step to point his finger at her and nod his head.

He meant by that the most dire revenge a human being can conjure up, but she only sighed and wiped up the puddles of water left behind him.

M. Quad.

Next Week: "He experiments with a boon to all Mankind."

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THE LION'S WARS

The Peninsular War 1808-1813.

It was an evil day for Napoleon when, in pursuance of his design for reducing Europe to a state of vassalage he resolved on expelling the effete and incapable Bourbons from Spain, and substituting a dynasty of his own.

In 1807, by exercise of the vilest arts, he extorted the abdication of King Charles, and installed in his place his brother, Joseph Bonaparte.

To support the new dynasty, Napoleon poured thousands of troops into Spain, 15,000 of which were intended for the conquest of Portugal.

The moment the Spaniards, recovering from their astonishment, began to exhibit signs of resentment, the troops were scattered over the country in order to nip all rebellion in the bud.

A fatal mistake, for when Spain rose as one man to thrust out the insolent intruder, the French, surprised and divided from each other by a difficult country, every province of which was a natural fortress, found themselves confronted by bands of guerillas, whose mode of fighting was admirably adapted to the country.

Accustomed to regard themselves as invincible, the French were so exasperated at the numerous defeats they experienced that more troops were sent out, and a determined effort made to subjugate the country.

But Britain, ever on the side of the weak, resolved that Spain should not be crushed, and in 1808 dispatched two expeditions to the assistance of the patriots: one under Sir Arthur Wellesley of 9,000 men; the other being led by the ill-fated Sir John Moore, and consisting of 10,000 men.

Soon after his landing, the Conqueror of Waterloo inflicted a severe defeat on Marshal Junot at Vimeria; but the forward movement which Wellesley contemplated was arrested by order of the Government at home. Accordingly, General Wellesley returned to England, and his army was joined to that of General Moore, who now found himself at the head of 28,000 men.

Double that number would not have stayed the disaster which followed.

Napoleon, on hearing of Vimeria, had flown to Spain with huge reinforcements. Quickly re-taking Madrid, he hurried in pursuit of Sir John Moore.

The British officers besought Sir John to fight, but Napoleon had at least 60,000 men, so he retreated to the coast, at his heels being Napoleon, who hoped, by checking the advance, to bring on a general engagement. But the rear-guard did its duty so well that the little army reached Corunna in safety.

Here it was that, to prevent his embarkation from being molested, Sir John Moore was forced to fight. What the result would have been had Napoleon commanded in person it is impossible to say. The threatening attitude of Austria called him to Paris on the eve of the fight. The battle of Corunna was a victory for our troops, but it cost us the life of Sir John Moore.

Britain being now thoroughly roused, Sir Arthur Wellesley was placed in command of a new expedition, 62,000 strong.

After cleansing Portugal of the enemy, the great British general contrived by a most masterly move-

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ment in 1809 to cross the Douro, despite the opposition of Marshal Soult.

Relying on the co-operation of the Spanish generals, the British then pushed on, and after persuading the Spanish Commander Cuesta to relinquish command of his army, he threw the combined forces at Marshal Victor at Tallavera.

The British numbered 53,000, of whom only 19,000 were Englishmen, whilst General Victor had under him 43,000 foot, 7,000 cavalry, and eighty guns. As the French had all the advantages attaching to superior forces when attacking, we were at first steadily pushed back.

The British, of course, took no notice of so trifling a matter, the day being still young, but to the Spaniards the situation seemed so pregnant with disaster that they began to waver. When a squadron of French horse appeared on their flank they ignominiously, after firing one irregular volley, fled.

By this time Wellington had come to see that the surest way of weakening Napoleon was to act on the defensive. Accordingly, he retreated into Portugal, fortified the famous lines of Torres Vedras, and prepared a campaign which was destined to drive the French out of Spain.

Napoleon in Paris, knowing nothing of the deep-laid plans of the "Sepoy General," as he called him, was furious that his marshals and their 400,000 men had failed to crush and expel the British.

Messina having taken Almeida, and Ciudad Rodrigo, marched at the head of 60,000 men into Portugal. Soult, with even a larger force, declared his intention of driving us into the sea; but when he reached the lines of Torres Vedras he paused, hesitated, and retreated, an example which was presently followed by Messina, but not till he had fought—and well fought, too—the battle of Fuentes d'Ormore.

French historians claim this battle as a victory, which is strange, considering that on the very night it was fought Messina retreated. For this behaviour he was replaced by Marmont. The British, it should be remembered, were greatly outnumbered; but it is by no means certain that, had the marshals been willing to forego their jealousies and hatreds, and combine their forces, France would have triumphed.

Be this as it may, Napoleon at this juncture made a fatal mistake. Believing that Wellesley was much weaker than he really was, he ordered Marmont to send a large portion of his force to Suchet, the only French marshal, we believe, who never suffered a defeat at the hands of the British.

On May 16th, 1811, was fought the battle of Albuera, which nearly ended in a victory for the French, owing to General Blake, who commanded the Spaniards, refusing to change the disposition of his troops when ordered to do so by General Beresford.

The French lancers had already pierced our lines, and defeat appeared so imminent that Beresford was about ordering a retreat, when he observed a couple of his infantry regiments marching stolidly forward to attack the impetuous French cavalry, who were also supported by infantry.

Knowing the qualities of his men, Beresford, instead of retiring, ordered some cavalry to take the French lancers and their supports in the flank. Being in dense columns, the onslaught when it came threw them into such disorder that our infantry, when they got them fairly on the move, literally pushed them off the field at the point of the bayonet. Being by this time tired out they sat down and ate their supper in sight of the astonished French, who were, however, too exhausted to again attack.

Soult declared that there was no chance of beating such troops, despite the mistakes of our generals, and so ordered a retreat.

Wellington, whose confidence in Beresford had been shaken, returned from the north and conducted the siege of Ciudad in person. He had intended to subdue the place by regular approaches, but hearing that Marmont was on the march, he decided to breach the walls and trust to an assault.

As soon as a couple of entrances had been made, the governor was summoned to surrender. Refusing, an attack was ordered from three points. Filling in the ditches which surrounded the fortress, our men rushed forward.

The French fought with the most desperate valour, but although they managed to hold one of the breaches, the British succeeded in storming the other. Even after the contending forces reached the streets the French charged again and again, but the stubbornness of our wonderful infantry would not be denied. We ought to have retreated, but as we wouldn't the French had no choice but to capitulate.

The capture of Ciudad, which ranks amongst the most brilliant exploits of our Army, cost us dear. It is true that when we did get inside we slew 300 of the foe and took 1,500 prisoners, beside 150 guns, and stores, but the storming of the breaches lessened our forces by 226 killed and 1,084 wounded, to say nothing of two generals who were shot in the street fighting.

Wellington now began his advance north, and Marmont, having received reinforcements, attacked him at Salamanca. The battle commenced by Marmont sending round his left wing to take us in the rear. Wellington allowed them to go just far enough to render the intervention of the main body impossible, and then, wheeling his whole force round, fell upon the division and annihilated it.

Marmont, who went to its assistance, was wounded, and General Clausel, on whom the command devolved, tried to retrieve the fortunes of the day by an attack on our centre. But Wellington's eagle eye had foreseen this move and he had his reserves ready, who, arriving quite fresh, greeted the furious onslaught of the French with cries of derision.

When the French began to retreat, we followed them with such expedition that the entire army was nearly driven into the river. This was a most complete victory.

By the time Salamanca was fought, the British army, flushed with victory, had so grown to regard themselves and their commander as invincible, that it is doubtful whether even the genius of Napoleon himself could have withstood the valour of our troops.

Wellington, it is needless to say, received a most enthusiastic welcome on entering Madrid.

Leaving the Spanish army to protect the capital against the Emperor Joseph's return, he invested the town of Burgos, an obstacle to the operations he contemplated.

Such was the confidence of our men, that a large party, acting without orders, actually assaulted the town before a breach was made, and were, as might be expected, repulsed.

The second assault, which took place after a breach had been made by the explosion of a mine, failed, because the storming party lost their way.

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Drawn by] [*Lawson Wood.*

When they had all been chased out of the houses a desperate fight took place in the streets.

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A third repulse was caused by the stupendous vanity of the storming party, who in a most vain-glorious manner, leisurely sauntered up to the breach and were promptly shot down.

A fourth attempt met with no better success and the men were nerving themselves for a fifth attack, upon what was, after all, an extremely small place, when Wellington suddenly abandoned the siege because he heard that General Souham with 45,000 men was rapidly approaching. Soult also was marching in his rear from Madrid with 60,000 more. In his retreat to Ciudad Rodrigo Wellington lost 9,000 men. Nothing like this number would have fallen had not the men become demoralised by their failure at Burgos. They committed the wildest excesses on the march, and were scarcely ever sober.

But Wellington did not remain long inactive, and soon the curtain was raised on the last act of that drama which was to end in the fall of Napoleon.

Every available man having been pressed into the army with which Russia was invaded, Wellington's calculations were not to be upset by the armies opposed to him being unexpectedly reinforced.

He, moreover, opened the campaign of 1813 with an army, including Spanish and Portuguese, quite as large as that of the French combined, viz., 160,000 men. To make sure of his prey, however, he seized the passes of the Pyrenees and thus cut the French communications.

But if this disturbed the French, a series of masterly manœuvres by which he forced all the armies in front of him to abandon their positions and retreat, so disconcerted the marshals that King Joseph now became seriously alarmed. A panic seizing the Court, the roads leading northwards became so blockaded with courtiers and their baggage that it was with difficulty the French army reached Vittoria without disaster.

On the plain of Vittoria, a huge expanse eight miles long by ten miles wide, King Joseph drew up his army. His aim was to so dispose his forces that he could keep open his communication both with Madrid and France.

Wellington could cut all the remaining communications with France, but to do so he would have to swing his left right round, thus severing his connection with his base in Portugal. It was a hazardous thing to do, but Wellington risked it.

The French drew up their army on the crest of some ridges at the rear of the plain. It extended over eight miles, and the bridges across the river in front were commanded by sixty pieces of artillery.

The French army expressed itself confident of winning; but the Court could not have been so hopeful, for the roads for miles in the rear of the army were crowded with vehicles of every description, containing the civilian parasites, their wives and families, goods and plunder.

The two armies were so well matched that the chances appeared equal.

At daybreak, June 21st, our right wing commenced the battle by attacking the heights above Puebla, directly in their front. Leaving the Spaniards in possession, Sir Rowland Hill, with the object of clearing the ridges on his side, ran his men across a valley in face of a heavy fire, and stormed the village of Sutigana.

As Sutigana was the key of the position, the French weakened their centre to recover the village.

Wellington, who had anticipated this, at once launched a strong force against the French centre, which would of a certainty have collapsed but for the aid rendered by their artillery. So destructive was their fire that Wellington held back his men till a couple of brigades of guns he had sent for, had silenced the French artillery.

Again advancing, our troops forced back the French centre till the village of Arty was reached. Here they made such a determined stand that Picton and his dare-devils were sent for. Picton, who was always reserved for work requiring the clearing out of an enemy who fought behind walls or hedges, at once set to work to make a clean sweep of the lot.

When they had all been chased out of the houses, a desperate fight took place in the streets.

The reinforcements sent to the French were of no avail. Picton's devils steadily forced their way up the village street till they got to the open country, when the French broke and ran.

The French plan of battle now began to betray serious evidence of weakness.

King Joseph insisted on a whole corps being detached to occupy the village of Gamara and so secure his communications with Bayonne. Our right wing had now so effectually driven the French left into their centre, that the various corps, losing formation, presently dissolved into a confusion which prevented them from executing any offensive movement.

Losing heart, the detachments holding a few remaining heights offered but a feeble resistance to our men. Despairing of the issue the retreat was sounded, and away went the French down the Pampluna road with the British in hot pursuit. The French were joined on the road by a large body of reserves who had not been engaged.

It was fortunate they were at hand, for the fugitives presently encountered the force lying in wait on the banks of the Zadora to intercept them.

The struggle waged at this spot was of indescribable ferocity.

Knowing that unless they broke through they would be taken in the rear by the British who were close behind, the French made a supreme effort and fighting in really grand style forced a passage. Never was victory more complete.

The French lost all their guns but two, and all their munitions of war.

Indeed, so precipitate did their retreat become, that the soldiers outstripped the vehicles of the Court and 2,000 of these fell into our hands. The spoils, in fact, were so vast that, when the soldiers held an auction of the booty the day after, the boards on which the booty was exposed for sale, extended for over two miles.

Our losses as usual were heavy—heavy because carrying enemies' positions always results in heavy loss of life. Our dead and wounded exceeded 5,000, of which 3,574 were British.

The French admitted to having lost over 7,000.

With the battle of Vittoria, the Peninsular War may be said to end.

Our matchless infantry, who, as Sir W. Napier has said, could go anywhere, marched 600 miles, fought over a dozen pitched battles, captured two large fortresses, finally driving out of Spain 130,000 of the best soldiers France ever produced.

Next week: **The Campaign in the Pyrenees and South of France (1813—14).**

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A CELESTIAL'S LOVE.

SARAH BARKER had told Milly Hunt a wonderful tale, and Milly, to whom it had been communicated in strict confidence, as a choice bit of "exclusive" news, of course immediately proceeded to impart it to all the other girls in the laundry.

Latimer Road, Notting Hill, is not famous for excessive refinement in the vernacular of its residents.

The "wash-tub" and the "ironing-board" do not appear to be conducive to a peculiarly high standard of either speech or manners; so t at when Milly had distributed her budget, it is not surprising that its reception was choicely expressive, not to say flowery.

"Wot! the yaller, dirty lot! a-comin' to do our work? Wash!—why they doesn't wash theirselves. Yah!"

"I tells yer they're not 'a-comin'! they're come!" insisted Milly Hunt, with the superior air of one who knew all about it.

"Then we'll duck 'em in 'ot suds, an' striten 'em out wiv' a flat-iron arterwuds!" cried Susy Maxted, a carroty-headed young amazon, and she certainly looked quite capable of doing it too.

"What O!" screamed the others in deafening chorus.

It was the dinner-hour, and their lungs were their own.

Now Susy Maxted, although a laundry girl, was a born leader in her little world, and by common consent was universally recognised as adviser-in-chief in all matters requiring arbitrative ability.

Disputes (and they were many and frequent), quarrels (mostly the result of feminine jealousy), courting questions (as innumerable as subtle), were referred to her for judgment and woe to the girl who refused to obey the order of the Court.

In this particular instance she was more than ordinarily authoritative, for did not the threatened invasion of the detested Chinaman mean for all of them lower wages and harder work?

"Why! they lives, I've heerd, on a farden a day!" said Susy contemptuously. "If they gets their foot in, where shall we be? In the street or the workus! An' I don't mean to be in neither, bet yer life on that!"

"Good old Susy!" screamed the chorus.

"'Ere! will yer leave 'em to me? I'll tackle 'em!" and the aggressively upward tilt of her impudent little nose, the wicked snap of her fingers, testified to the "goodwill," at any rate, of Susy's intentions. "No! I shan't tell yer what I'm a-goin' to do—I'm on my own this trip. Milly Hunt; if you an' Sally Barker tries ter find out my little bit, I'll mark yer, an' don't yer furgit it!"

That evening there might have been seen in the neighbourhood of Willesden a young woman of strong build and determined manner, loitering up and down the streets of that suburb.

Her appearance gave the impression that she was on conquest bent; as in a sense she was.

The enormous be-feathered and be-flowered hat; the startling bright blue skirt; the scarlet jacket with big pearl buttons (a costume, as a rule, donned only when the male enemy was to be encountered), implied, apparently, that the wearer had matter of unusual importance on hand.

It was a beautiful summer evening, and Susy would, under ordinary circumstances, have revelled in it, according to her lights, but her present business was extraordinary, and forbade frivolity.

For more than an hour did she watch the gates of a certain old house, at the back of which had lately been erected two or three long, low-pitched wooden sheds.

Lights gleamed in every window, especially did the sheds aforesaid send up from their open skylights not only beams of light, but dense clouds of steam.

Susy watched all this with the silent sleuthy keenness of a cat.

Watch as she would, however, nothing human or otherwise passed in or out the gates. To all intents and purposes, it might have been an enchanted place, where the work was done by invisible hands.

Thus patiently waiting, Susy, turning her head a moment to gaze up the long, dreary-looking road, saw something or someone approaching in the far distance.

The house no longer had attraction for her, her eyes were fixed upon the slowly nearing object.

She felt that, whatever it was, she must go to meet it, and with a defiant settling of her hat, a twist of her side fringes, Susy swung up the street.

Wang-Ho, tired, dusty, and barely recovered from the terrors of shipboard, thought the scarlet and blue vision advancing toward him to be the most beautiful and entrancing he had ever beheld. Small-footed, almond-eyed houris of Pekin had he seen and worshipped by the score, but here was a blaze of golden-flamed hair, a picture of pink and white loveliness that fairly overcame him at the very first sight of it.

Hungry, thirsty, he could yet lift his "Celestial" soul to an ecstatic contemplation of this oncoming daughter of the "foreign devil."

Wang-Ho was young and guileless, and quite inexperienced in the ways and wiles of the English girl. She was to him an absolutely unknown quantity.

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His admiration did not decrease upon newer acquaintance; rather did it grow with wonderful rapidity.

Presently Wang-Ho was conscious of an interruption in his progress.

At the particular spot where it occurred, there were no houses, but plots of waste building land on both sides of the road.

Too, they had the path to themselves, for in either direction other pedestrians there were none.

"Say! are yer a-goin' there?" inquired Susy sharply, standing full in front of Wang-Ho, and pointing with her thumb over her shoulder to the house she had been so persistently watching.

Wang-Ho only grinned, nodded his head in an inconsequent, half-vacuous way, and clasped tighter to his breast, with both his lean yellow hands, the little blue bundle he carried.

"Oh! yer are! are yer! Though yer might be civil enough ter answer a person as speaks civil ter yer. Well, just yer mind wot I'm a-goin' ter tell yer, turn round an' go back agin ter 'Ong-Kong or wotever the place is as yer've cum from! Yer ain't wanted 'ere!"

Wang-Ho had a dim indefinite sort of idea that this beautiful creature was angry with him; was in some way wishful to bar his way to the laundry whither he was bound.

"You allee same plitty gel, velly plitty," he said at length, his mind running only upon this, to him, novel sensation of love at first sight.

"'Ere, chuck it! None o' that! Wot d'yer takeme for?"

"Allee same plitty, velly plitty," he repeated, smiling his most fetching smile.

"If yer says that ag'in, I'll land yer one! I ain't 'ere ter listen ter yer fooleries," said Susy with an ominous shake of her broad shoulders. "See that place?"—pointing again to the house up the road—"Well, sure as yer goes there, I'll cut off yer pigtail, and make yer swaller it, there!"

With that, Susy swung him round, gave him a by no means gentle push, and walked away.

Wang-Ho watched her, as she stepped out ahead of him, and, instead of turning round again, and pursuing his journey according to his original programme, followed in her wake.

From that moment Susy Maxted had no peace. Dinner-times, evening-times, it was always the same; there was Wang-Ho, smiling, patient, waiting for her, until, what with the chaff of the other girls, and her own wrath, she was on the brink of doing something that would cause trouble to somebody.

One day, a little gutter-snipe delivered into her hands a piece of rice-paper, inscribed with Chinese characters, and which the boy averred had been given him by Wang-Ho to pass on to her.

He knew it was for her, he said, because "Chiney" had told him that it was for "Plitty gel—hair allee same this." "This" being the broad red border round the missive.

This occurred in the middle of the day, and Susy, hot-tempered by nature, and now at white heat almost, determined to put an end to the affair that very night, and at any cost.

Sure enough, at the usual hour, at the corner of the nearest turning was Wang-Ho.

His shoes were spotless; his shirt and jacket without a wrinkle; while his eternal smile was, if anything, even more beatific than aforetime.

By permission of the forewoman, Susy came out a few minutes before the other girls, and without a moment's hesitation marched rapidly up to the expectant "Celestial."

"D'yer see that?" she said to him—not loudly, but so as if she meant it, that he could not fail to understand her drift—first flourishing the offending 'love-letter' in his face, and then dropping it in the muddy roadway, and dancing upon it. "D'yer see that? D'yer think I wants yer nasty 'tensions, or yer cumpany? Take that! an' that!"—giving him a couple of resounding slaps on either cheek—"If yer comes 'ere agin, a-follering of me, I'll kill yer! I will—s'elp me!"

Wang-Ho saw the dethronement of his idol with sorrow and regret; but his smile was still there, and without doubt it was this latter peculiarity which roused in Susy such irritation, bitter wrath and vengeful desire.

But her purpose was served. He never troubled her more.

* * * * *

Some little while afterwards the police were called one night to a certain notorious opium den in the East End to remove the body of a young Chinaman, who had evidently succumbed to an over-dose of the deadly drug.

On examination there was found upon him wrapped carefully away in the inner folds of his clothing a small piece of dirty paper, with rudely scrawled upon it that which was probably designed for a woman's head.

The policemen laughed. They generally, upon their own confession, do laugh at such things, but all the same in this case there were the elements of something strangely pathetic. It was a little bit of human nature, and human nature, be it white or yellow, is a very real thing.

Wang-Ho had his little heart-flutter, and—it came to nothing.

Susy Maxted will, possibly, some day mate with a man who will swear at her and knock her about; and who shall say what the end will be? Ralph Enderby.

YOUR HEAD AND SHOULDERS ONLY.

If you have a relative who has passed away either at home in peace or abroad in war, send his photograph—which you probably cherish—and we will enlarge it to a beautiful India ink and crayon portrait, 15in. by 12in., mounted on plate sunk mount 24in. by 19in.

Relatives of soldiers at the front may obtain one of these enlargements for 6s.

Other photographs will be enlarged for 7s.

You will certainly get a genuine bargain by availing yourself of this offer. The enlargements can be made from any photograph, large or small, tin-types, or any kind of glass picture, provided the print is legible. All the enlargements are of the head and shoulders only.

What to do.

Write your name and address plainly in ink on a slip of paper, also on the back of the portrait you are sending us. Get a postal order for 7s. (if the photograph be that of a soldier or sailor get a 6s. postal order). Place all of these in an envelope, or make a securely packed parcel of them and address it to the PORTRAIT EDITOR, *Pearson's Weekly*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

A Reduction of Threepence

on each enlargement, when the order is for two or more from the same photograph, will be made.

Orders will be treated in rotation.

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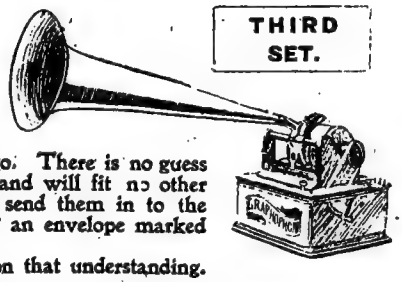
"QUICK CHANGE" PUZZLES.

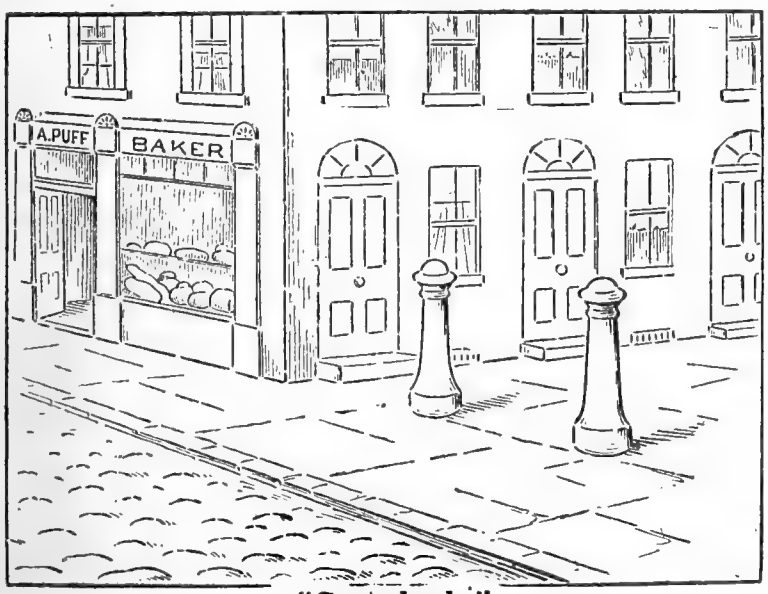
First Prize	*A Magnificent Graphophone.*
Second Prize	*£2.*
Six Prizes of	*10s. each.*



On this page you will find two drawings exactly alike, and a number of parts of figures. What you have to do is to cut out the parts of the figures, leaving a small margin, and paste them on the picture in the way they should go. There is no guess work about it. Each part of the figures should be pasted on a certain spot, and will fit no other spot. When you have pasted up your picture, pin the three sets together, and send them in to the Editor, "Short Stories," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., in an envelope marked "Quick Change," to arrive not later than Thursday, January 10th.

Competitors must abide by the Editor's final decision, and may enter only on that understanding.

Football.



"Cartwheels."

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NEW SERIAL STORY. START TO-DAY.

By Louis Tracy.

Author of "The Final War," "An American Emperor," etc.

SUMMARY.

LADY DELIA LYLE leaves her house one foggy November afternoon, and is seen at Victoria Station, on the Underground Railway, by Mr. Reginald Brett, a barrister friend of her husband, who gets her ticket and puts her in the train for Richmond, where she says she is going to see her sister.

She does not return home at night, so in the morning her husband, Sir Charles Lyle, wires to her at her sister's, only to find that she has not been there.

Later in the day Brett happens to meet Sir Charles, and tells him that he saw Lady Delia on the previous evening, and is surprised to learn that nothing has been heard of her since.

After some days have passed, without bringing any news of Lady Delia, Sir Charles puts the matter into the hands of detectives, Inspector Winter taking charge of the case.

Brett also promises to do all he can, and he finds out that Lady Delia, on the night of her disappearance, instead of going to Richmond, alighted at Sloane Square, and went to a block of flats called Raleigh Mansions.

Towards the end of the month the body of a woman, evidently murdered, is found wedged beneath a drain-pipe in the Thames at Putney, and, though Sir Charles does not identify the body, Brett imagines it to be that of Lady Delia. Shortly after this discovery Lady Delia's maid, Jane Harding, disappears.

Brett now starts investigations at Raleigh Mansions, and he fixes on two residents there as being likely to have been connected with Lady Delia. These are a Mr. Sydney H. Pyne, who is not at present in residence, and a Mrs. Hilmer, whom he finds to be Pyne's sister, and this lady Brett takes to the theatre one evening.

Among one of the actresses who had a walking on part, Brett notices Jane Harding, and at the close of the performance, after seeing Mrs. Hilmer to her carriage, he follows her to a restaurant. She tells him that she has had a little money left her, which has enabled her to go on the stage.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE CITY.

MESSRS. DODGE AND CO., of Leadenhall-street, possessed business premises of greater pretensions than Brett had pictured to himself from Mrs. Hilmer's description of their transactions with her brother.

Not only were their offices commodious and well situated, but a liberal display of gold lettering, intermingled with the official brass-plates marking the registered offices of many companies, gave evidence of some degree of importance—whether fictitious or otherwise Brett could not determine, as he scrutinised the exterior of the building on the following morning.

Moreover, workmen were even then busy in substituting the title "Dodge, Son, and Co., Ltd.," for "Messrs. Dodge and Company," the suggestive nature of the latter designation having perhaps proved a stumbling-block in the way of the guileless investor.

When the barrister entered the office, a busy place, with many clerks, and adorned with gigantic maps of the Rand, West Australia, Cripple Creek, and Klondike, he asked for "Mr. Dodge."

His card procured him ready admission. He was shown into an elaborately upholstered apartment of considerable size. At the farther end, seated in front of a gorgeous American desk, was a young man who ostentatiously finished a letter and then motioned the barrister to a seat.

Brett was curious on the question of the age of the head of the firm.

"Are you Mr. Dodge, or the son?" he said, with the utmost gravity.

The other man was taken aback by this unexpected method of opening the conversation. It annoyed him.

"I am the representative of the firm, sir, and able to deal fully with your business, whatever it may be," he replied.

"No doubt. But it will simplify matters if I know exactly to whom I am addressing myself."

After an uneasy shuffling in his seat—he could not guess what this keen-faced, earnest-eyed lawyer might want—the representative of Messrs. Dodge, Son, and Co. (Limited) explained that he was Dodge, and the name of the firm had been adopted for general purposes.

"Then there is no 'son,' I take it?"

"Yes, there is, sir"—this with a snort of anger.

"How old is he?"

"What the dickens has that got to do with it? Will you kindly tell me what you want, sir, as my time is fully occupied?"

"Just now I want to know how old the 'son' is?"

This calm persistence irritated Mr. Dodge beyond endurance.

"Three years, confound you, and his sister is four months. Can I oblige you with any more details concerning my family affairs?"

Having purposely raised his man to boiling point by this harmless method of examination, Reggie went on to tackle

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the real business in hand. He was quite sure that a financial sharper in a temper was far more likely to blurt out the truth than if he were approached in a matter-of-fact manner.

"To begin with," he explained, never taking his eyes off the furious face of Mr. Dodge, "I have called to ask for information with regard to your dealings with Mr. Sydney H. Pyne, of Raleigh Mansions, Sloane-square."

"I never heard of him in my life. You have evidently come to the wrong office, Mr. Brett."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Well, nearly so. However, I can tell you in a moment, as it is impossible for me to carry every name connected with several companies in my memory."

Mr. Dodge had recovered his temper now that he saw a chance of disconcerting his caustic visitor. He touched an electric bell and told the answering youth to send Mr. Hawkins.

"My correspondence clerk," he said to Brett when Hawkins entered. "Are we in communication with any one named Sydney H. Pyne, Mr. Hawkins?"

"No, sir."

"Have you ever heard the name?"

"No, sir."

"That will do. You may go. You see you have come to the wrong shop, Mr. Brett."

"Yes, so I see."

The barrister kept looking at the back of Mr. Dodge's head, but made no move.

Mr. Dodge became puzzled.

"Now, Mr. Brett," he cried, "you know the age of my son and the extent of my information about Mr. Pyne. Is there anything else in which I may be of service?"

"Yes. You do a good deal of underwriting, mostly for the flotation of gold-mining companies?"

"Y-yes. That is a branch of our business."

"I am interested in this class of undertaking, and I was given to understand that Mr. Pyne had had some dealings with you in a similar respect for a considerable sum of money."

"The name is absolutely unknown to me."

"Of course. So I understand. I am sorry to hear it. Several clients of mine have money to invest in that way and I naturally came to a firm whose name apparently figured largely in the transactions of Mr. Pyne."

It was good for Brett to see the manner in which Mr. Dodge metaphorically kicked himself for his previous attitude. His emotion was painful. For quite an appreciable time he could not trust his sentiments to words.

At last he struggled to express himself.

"Really, Mr. Brett, if only you had put things differently. Don't you see, it rather upset me when you came in and began jawing about the youngsters. And then you spring Mr. Pyne's name on me—a man of whom I have no sort of knowledge. It must have been my firm of which your friends heard. There is absolutely no other Dodge in Leadenhall-street. Indeed, we are the only financial Dodges—that is, Messrs. Dodge, Son, and Co. (Limited) are the only name dealing with financial matters—in the City."

By this time Brett had assured himself that Mr. Dodge did not know Mr. Pyne under that name, and that if the change of name had been adopted by Mrs. Hilmer's brother to conceal himself from Dodge, it was likely to be successful.

"Anyhow, I am here, Mr. Dodge," he said cheerfully, "so I may as well enter into negotiations with you. Have you any good things in hand at this moment?"

"Some of the best. We are just waiting for the market to ease a bit, and we shall have at least five splendid properties to place before the public. By the way, do you smoke?"

"Really, Mr. Brett, if only you had put things differently."

Brett did smoke; and Mr. Dodge produced a box of excellent cigars. Then he warmed to his work.

"Here is the prospectus of the Golden Halo Mine, capital £150,000, for which the vendors are asking £140,000 in cash, with a working capital of £10,000. The ore now in sight is estimated to produce two millions sterling, and the mine is not one-tenth developed. We are offering underwriters ten per cent. in cash, and there is not the slightest risk, as the shares will stand at a high premium within a few days after the lists——"

"It sounds most promising," said Brett; "but my principals are more interested in taking up concerns which have been already established, but in which, for want of sufficient capital, the vendors' shares have, by a process of reconstruction, come into the market. If you have anything of that kind——"

"The very thing," interrupted Dodge, excitedly. "The Springbok Mine will just suit 'em. After all is said and done, Golden Halos are a bit in the air, between you and me. But the Springbok is a genuine article. It was capitalised for a quarter of a million, and the directors went to allotment on a subscription list of about £14,000. This money has been expended, but twice the amount is necessary to properly develop the property. A call was made on the shares, but no one paid up, and there is a talk now of compulsory reconstruction. Believe me, money put into it now will yield 200 per cent. in dividends within twelve months."

"There is a whiff of scent on this trail," said Reggie to himself. He added aloud: "That looks promising. Can you give me details?"

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"By all means. Here is the original prospectus."

Brett glanced through the document, which dealt with the Springbok claims on the Rand with more candour than is usually exhibited in such compilations. Judging from the reports of several mining engineers of repute it really looked as if, this time, Mr. Dodge was speaking with some degree of accuracy.

"This reads well," said Brett. "What proportion of share capital is falling in on the reconstruction scheme?"

"I hold 50,000 shares myself," cried Dodge, "and though my money is locked up just now I am so convinced about this mine that I will manage to pay the call myself. Roughly speaking, there are 150,000 shares to be underwritten at, say, 3s. each."

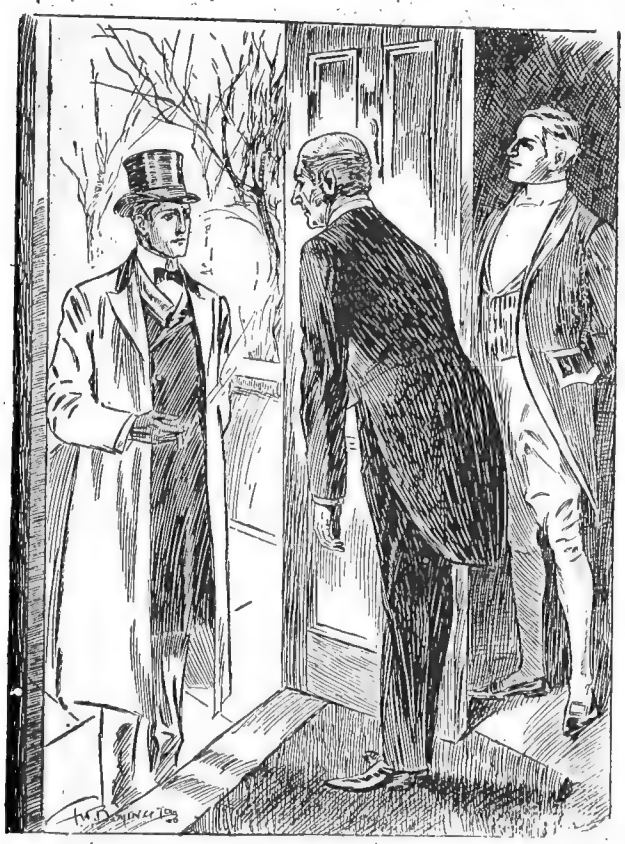
"And who are the present holders?" The barrister asked the question in the most unconcerned way imaginable, yet upon the answer depended the whole success or otherwise of this hitherto unproductive mission.

Mr. Dodge was manifestly anxious. "I take it that we are talking with a definite view to business?"

The barrister hesitated. Even in the detection of crime a man does not care to tell a deliberate lie, and Dodge's attitude so far had been candid enough. The Springbok Mine honestly looked to be a good speculative investment, so he resolved to place the proposition before one or two friends of his who dealt with similar matters, and who were fully able to look after their own interests.

"Yes," he said, "I am here for that purpose. If my principals like this thing they will go in for it."

"Then here is the vendors' list," said Mr. Dodge, taking a foolscap sheet from a drawer.



"Sir Charles left yesterday for Bournemouth, sir.'

Reggie perused it nonchalantly. His quick eyes took in each name and address out of half-a-dozen, and rejected all as being in no way connected with the man whose antecedents he was seeking.

Yet, where possible, he left nothing to chance.

"Have you any objection to a copy of these being made?" he said.

Mr. Dodge hummed doubtfully.

"You see," went on the barrister, "it is best to be quite candid with people whom you ask to invest in risky, if apparently high-promising, ventures. I presume these gentlemen are moneyless. If so it is a factor in favour of your scheme. Should any of them be men of means my principals would naturally ask why they did not themselves underwrite the shares."

Mr. Dodge was convinced. "From that point of view," he cried emphatically, "they are above suspicion. Jot them down, sir."

Reggie armed himself with the requisite documents, and they parted with mutual good wishes. It was only after reflection that Mr. Dodge saw how remarkably little he had got out of the interview. "He was a jolly sharp chap," communed the company promoter. "I wonder what he was really after. And who the dickens is Mr. Sydney H. Pyne? Anyhow, the Springbok business is quite above board. How *can* I raise the wind for my little lot?"

If Mr. Brett had sufficiently probed Mr. Dodge's holding, he would have been saved much future perturbation. But clever as he was, he did not know all the methods of financial juggling practised by experts on the Stock Exchange.

A hansom brought him quickly west to Portman Square. In fulfilment of his promise he was about to tell Sir Charles Lyle the salient features of his recent discoveries.

When the door of Wensley House opened to him, the butler, Thompson, who happened to be in the hall, anticipated the footman's answer to Brett's inquiry.

"Sir Charles left yesterday for Bournemouth, sir. He was that hovercome by the weather an' his trouble that he has gone for a few days' rest at the seaside. If you called, sir, I was to tell you he would be glad to see you there should you find it convenient to run down. And, Mr. Brett, sir, you'll never guess who came 'ere this morning as bold as brass."

"Miss Jane Harding?"

"Now, how on earth can you hit upon things that way, sir? It was her, her very self. And you ought to 'ave seen her airs. 'Thompson,' sez she, 'is Sir Chawles at 'ome.' 'No, he isn't,' sez I; 'but you're wanted at the polis station.' She was in a keb, an' she 'ad asked a butcher's boy to pull the bell, so 'im an' the cabby larfed. 'Thompson,' she said, very red in the face, 'I'll 'ave you dismissed for your impereence.' An' off she went. Did you ever hear anythink like it, sir?"

"No, Thompson; Miss Harding is certainly a cool hand."

Brett walked to his chambers, and his stroll through the parks was engrossed by one subject of thought. It was not Mrs. Hilmer, nor Pyne, nor Dodge that troubled him. What puzzled him more than all else was the "impereence" of Jane Harding.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOTEL DU CERCLE.

BRETT did not go to Bournemouth.

He left London by the night mail, and after a wearisome journey of thirty-six hours, found himself in the garden courtyard of the Hotel du Cercle at Monte Carlo.

Refreshed by a bath and an excellent *déjeuner* Brett decided to go quietly to work and search the visitors' book for himself without asking any questions. The Hotel du Cercle was a popular resort, and it took him some time,

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largely devoted to the elucidation of hieroglyphic signatures, before he was quite satisfied that no one even remotely suggestive of the name of Sydney H. Pyne had recorded his presence in the hotel since the first week in November.

The barrister, for the first time, began to doubt Mrs. Hilmer. Twice had her statements not been verified by the facts. It was with an expression of keen annoyance at his own folly in trusting so much to a favourable impression that Brett turned to the hotel clerk to ask if the name Sydney H. Pyne was familiar to him.

The courteous Frenchman screwed up his forehead into a reflective frown before he answered: "But yes, monsieur. Me, I have not seen the gentleman, but he exists. There have been letters—two, three letters."

"Ah, letters! Has he received them?"

The attendant examined a green baize-covered board, decorated with diamonds of tape, in which was stuck an assortment of letters, mostly addressed to American tourists.

"They were here. They have gone! Then he has taken them."

"Yes," cried Brett; "but surely you know something about him?"

"Nothing. This hall is open to all the world."

"Do you tell me that anyone can come here and take off any letters that may be stuck in that rack?"

"Will the gentleman be pleased to consider? Many persons give their address here days and weeks before they come to arrive. Some persons, in the manner of Monte Carlo, do not wish their names to be known of everybody. We cannot distinguish. We do not allow the address of the hotel to be used improperly, if we know it; but there are no complaints."

The barrister did not argue the matter further. He only said: "Perhaps you can help me thus far, as I am very anxious to meet Mr. Pyne. About how long is it since the last letter came for him?"

"But, certainly. It came yesterday. It was re-addressed from some place in London. If possible, with the next one I will keep watch for Mr. Pyne."

So Mrs. Hilmer had not misled him. The so-called Pyne was in Monte Carlo, but had possibly disguised himself under another name. Again did Brett consult the hotel register, this time with the aid of the vendors' list in the Springbok Mine, but without result.

There was nothing for it but to familiarise himself with Monte Carlo and its *habitués*, awaiting developments in the chase of Pyne. In January, when London alternates between fog and sleet, it is not an intolerable thing to remain in forced idleness amidst the sunshine and flowers of the Riviera. There are two ways of "doing" Monte Carlo. You may live riotously, lose your substance at the Casino, and go home on a free ticket supplied by the proprietors of the gambling saloons, or you may enjoy to the utmost the keen air, magnificent scenery, fine promenades, and excellent music—the two latter provided by the same benevolent agency.

It is needless to say which of these alternatives appealed to Reginald Brett. Being a rich man, it was of no consequence to him to lose a five-pound note in backing the red for a five minutes' bit of excitement. Being a sensible one, he then quitted the Casino and went for a stroll in the gardens.

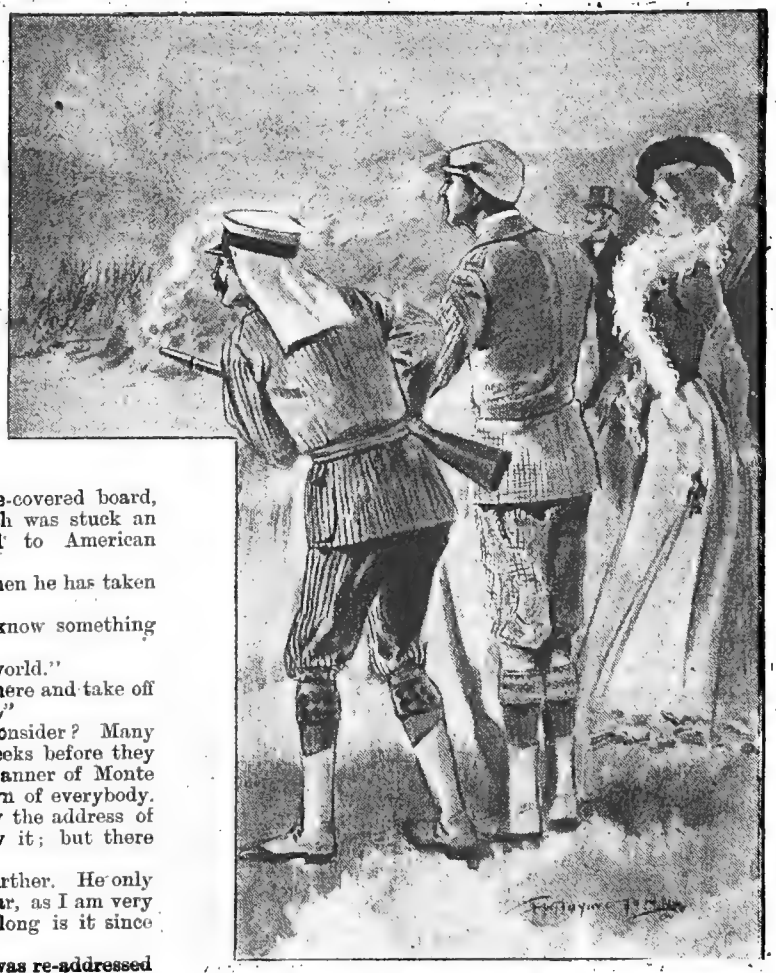
Fashion, backed by the doctors, has decreed that no longer shall the northern littoral of the Mediterranean be the haven of rest for those afflicted with pulmonary complaints. Weak-chested and consumptive people are now banished to the windless icy altitudes of Switzerland; so of recent years a walk through Nice, Mentone, or Monte Carlo itself is not such a depressing experience as it was when every second person encountered looked to be a hopeless invalid.

A pigeon-shooting match was in progress at the base of the cliff, and, as Brett fell in with a friend who took a prominent part in local life, the two entered the club grounds to watch the contest.

At the moment a handsome, well set-up young Englishman was shooting off a tie with a Russian Count. A very pretty girl, with a delicate and refined beauty enhanced by a pleasant expression, was taking a most unfeminine interest in the slaughter of the pigeons by the Englishmen.

Her eyes spoke her thoughts. It was as if they said: "I do not want the birds to be killed, but I want a certain person to win."

Nine birds each had been grassed, and the Russian was growing impatient. The Englishman was cool, his fair backer keenly excited. The Count fired and missed his



The cynic was right. In the thirteenth round the Count alone scored.

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tenth. Up rose the Englishman's bird, and the girl could not restrain an impetuous "Now!"

So the Englishman missed also.

Amidst the buzz of comment that arose, Brett said to his companion: "What's going on?"

"This is the final tie in the International. It is a big prize, and each man has backed himself heavily. The two are Albert Mensmore and Count Bischkoff. That girl has taken all the nerve out of Mensmore. You will see that, bar accidents, he is a goner."

The cynic was right. In the thirteenth round the Count alone scored, and smiled largely in response to his antagonist's quaint congratulations. As for the girl, it was with difficulty that she restrained her tears.

"I think that we have witnessed a tragedy," said Brett's acquaintance as they walked off; and the barrister agreed with him. He was sorry for Mensmore and his pretty supporter. Mayhap the loss of the match meant a great deal to both of them.

That night he found by chance that Mensmore lived at the Hotel du Cercle. He met him in the billiard-room and tried to get him into conversation. But the young fellow was too miserable to respond to his advances. Beyond a mere civil acknowledgment of some slight act of politeness Brett could not draw him out.

Next morning he saw Mensmore again. If the man looked haggard the previous evening his appearance now was positively startling, that is, to one of Brett's keen powers of observation. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have seen that Mensmore had not slept well. Brett was assured that, for some reason, the other's brain was dominated by some overwhelming idea, and one which might eventuate in a tragic manner were it to be allowed to go on unchecked.

For some reason he took a good deal of interest in his unfortunate fellow-countryman, and determined to help him if the opportunity presented itself.

It came, with dramatic rapidity.

During dinner he noticed that Mensmore was in such a state of mental disturbance that he ate and drank with the air of one who is feverishly wasting time rather than replenishing his strength.

Soon after eight o'clock, at the hour when frequenters of the Casino go there in order to secure a seat for the evening's play, Mensmore quitted the dining-room. Brett unobtrusively followed him, and was just in time to see him enter the lift.

The barrister waited in the hall, having first secured his hat and overcoat from the bureau, where he happened to have left them.

Even whilst he noted the descending lift, in which he could see Mensmore, who had donned a light covert coat, the breast of which bulged somewhat on the left side, the hotel clerk came to him, triumphantly holding a letter.

"And now, Monsieur," cried the clerk, "we shall see what we shall see."

The missive was addressed to the mysterious Sydney H. Pyne, and had evidently been forwarded by the Sloane Square Post-Office.

With a clang the door of the lift swung open and Mensmore hastened out. Brett had to decide instantly betweeen the chance of seeing Pyne with his own eyes and pursuing the fanciful errand he had mapped out in imagination with reference to the stranger who so interested him.

"Thank you," he said to the clerk, "I am going to the Casino for an hour. You will greatly oblige me by keeping a sharp look-out for any one who claims this letter."

"Monsieur, it shall have my utmost regard."

The barrister had not erred in his surmise as to Mensmore's destination. The young man walked straight across the square and entered the grounds in which stands the famous Casino.

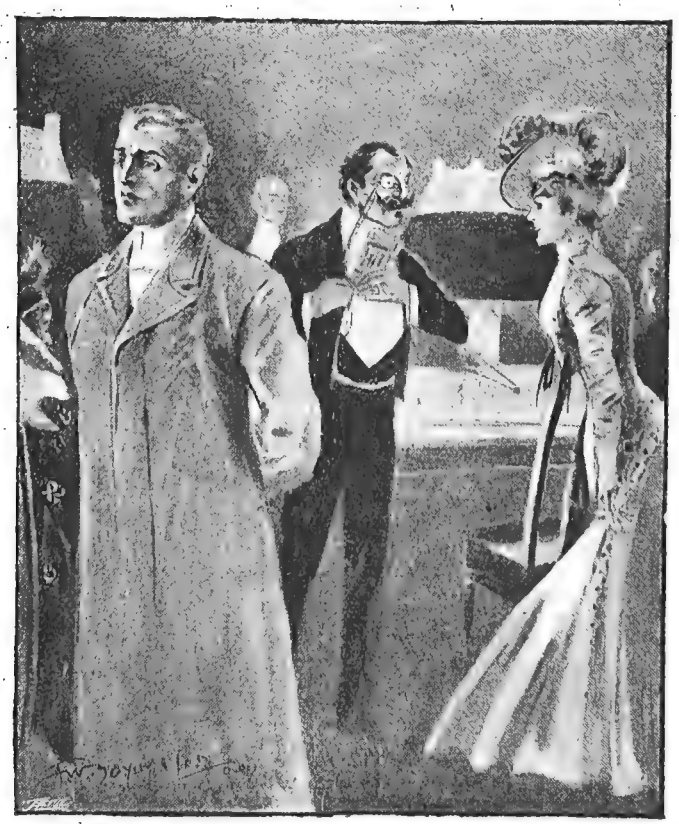
An excellent band was playing a selection from "The Geisha;" the well-kept promenades were fast filling with a fashionable throng; the silver radiance of the moon lighting up gardens, rocks, and sea might well have added the last link to the pleasant bondage that would keep any one from the gambling-saloon that night—but Mensmore heeded none of these things.

He passed the barrier, closely followed by Brett, ran up the steps, crossed the spacious foyer, and disappeared through the baize doors that guard the magnificent room in which roulette is played.

Round the centre table a fairly considerable crowd had already gathered. Several croupiers were installed on their platform seats, but there is something curiously fascinating for the gambler in the presence of others. It would seem to be an almost ridiculous thing for a man to stalk solemnly up to an empty table and stake his money on the chances of the game merely for the edification of the official in charge.

Brett entered the room soon after Mensmore, and saw the latter elbowing his way to a seat about to be vacated by a stout Spanish lady, who had rapidly lost the sum she allowed herself to stake each day.

She was one of those numerous players who bring to the Casino a certain amount daily, and systematically stop playing when they



Both men rose simultaneously, the Italian grinning at a smart Parisienne.

have either lost their money or won a previously determined maximum.

This method, in fact, is the only one whereby even a rich individual can indulge in this costly pastime, and, at the same time, escape speedy ruin. With a fair share of luck it may be made to pay; with continuous bad fortune the loss is spread over such a period that common sense has some opportunity to rescue the victim before it is too late.

Reggie took up a position whence he could note the actions of the stranger in whom he was so interested. At first Mensmore staked nothing. He placed a small pile of gold, some £20, in front of him, and then he seemed to listen expectantly to the croupier's monotonous cry: "Vingt-sept, rouge, impair, passe," or "Dix-huit, noir, pair, manque," and so on; whilst the little ivory ball whizzed round the disc, and the long rake, with unerring skill, drew in or pushed forward the sum lost or won.

The dominant expression of Mensmore's face as he sat and listened was one of disappointment. Something for which he waited did not happen, and at last, with a tightening of his lips and a gathering sternness in his eyes, he placed five sovereigns on the red, the number previously called being 13.

Black won.

For the next three attempts, each time with a £5 stake on the board, Mensmore backed the red, but still the black won.

Next to him an Italian, betting in notes of a thousand francs each, had quadrupled his first bet by backing the black.

Both men rose simultaneously, the Italian grinning delightedly at a smart Parisienne, who joyously nodded her congratulations, the Englishman quiet, utterly unmoved, but slightly pallid.

He passed out into the foyer and stopped to light a cigarette. Brett noticed that his hand was steady, and that all the air of excitement had gone.

These were ill signs. There is no man so calm as he who has deliberately resolved to take his own life. That Mensmore was ruined, that he was hopelessly in love with a woman whom he could not marry, and that he was about to commit suicide Brett was as certain as though the facts had been proved before a coroner.

But this thing should not happen if he, Brett, could prevent it.

In the gardens the band was now playing one of Waldteufel's waltzes Mensmore listened to the fascinating melody for a moment before he strolled off to the left of the Casino.

He hesitated at the door of the writing-room, but he went on puffing furiously at his cigarette. A guard looked at him as he turned again to the left, and made for the shaded terraces overlooking the sea.

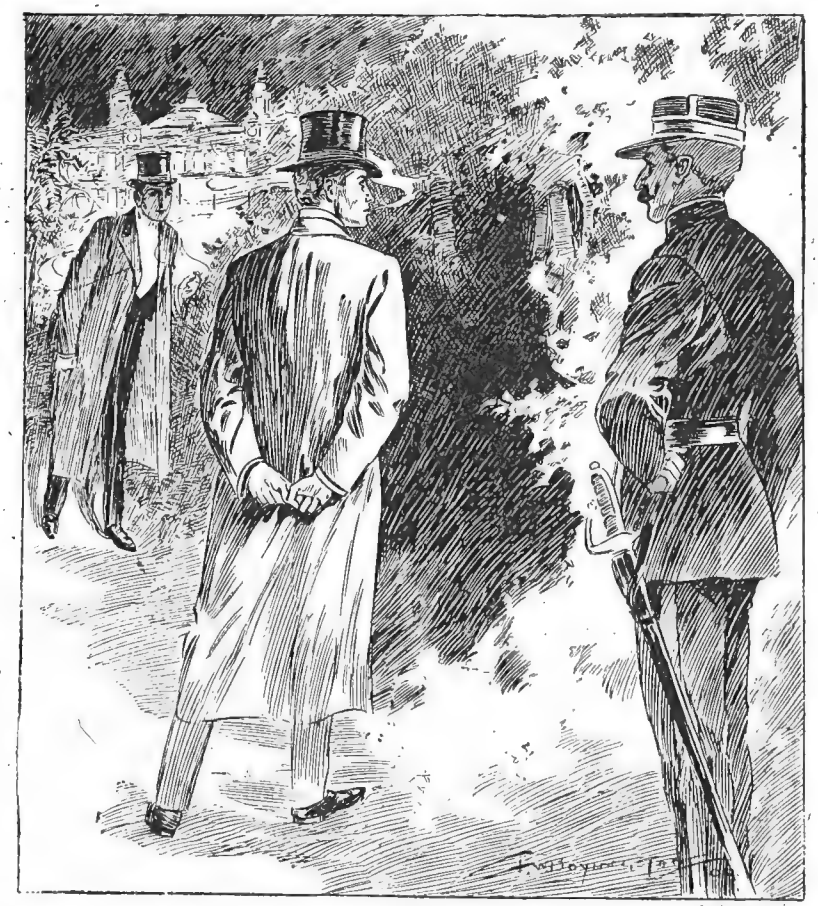
"A silent Englishman," thought the man; and he caught sight of Brett, also smoking, pre-occupied, and solitary.

"Another silent Englishman. *Mon dieu!* What miserable lives these English lead!"

And so the two vanished into the blackness of the foliage, while the frou-frou of silk on the promenade mingled with the soft laughter of the women, the modulated voices of the men, and the sweet strains of the music.

If it be true that extremes meet, then this was a night for a tragedy.

(To be continued.)



"Another silent Englishman. *Mon dieu!* What miserable lives the English lead!"

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT XMAS FESTIVITIES.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Keepers of the People," by Edgar Jepson, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. C. G. F. Chute, of 3 Belleville Avenue, Rathgar Road, Dublin. Attempts this week must deal with Stories about ANY SUBJECT, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 7th. Post-cards only, please.

Poor Old Chap!

UNCLE BARKER asked us all to dinner last Christmas, hinting at the same time that we should have a little surprise. We had!

As the principal dish was brought in, he said:

"Now, my dears, here is the biggest turkey on record, raised on my own bit of farm, too."

It certainly was an enormous bird, and for a long time it sturdily resisted the persuasions of the carving knife.

At length, just as our respected relative paused for breath, a deep and agonised voice broke from its mangled bosom.

"Oh, Barker, Barker! How can you treat me like this? Don't you remember how we used to play together when we were young?"

We gazed at one another in consternation, and it was several minutes before we remembered that cousin Bob was a bit of a ventriloquist.

C. G. F. C.

The Splodgers' Christmas Guest.

"MARIE, my dear, I forgot to tell you, I'm going to bring home a member of the club on Christmas Eve," said Mr. Splodgers, a few nights since.

"Club!" exclaimed the horrified Mrs. S. "What club? Pray, how long have you belonged to this precious club of yours unknown to your wife?"

"About four months, my love," said Splodgers, mildly. "I think you'll like the young fellow. He's very quiet, but only wants drawing a bit."

"I hate your quiet fellows!" exclaimed Mrs. S., spitefully. "At Christmas time I like somebody who's jolly."

"Well, he may rise to the occasion, you know, but I hope he won't."

"That's just like you, Splodgers. So selfish! You two will stick yourselves over the fire, and it will be jaw, jaw, jaw, all day long."

"I won't say but what you may be right," said Splodgers, evasively. "However, he's coming; and as he's under an obligation——"

"Obligation! What obligation, Mr. Splodgers?"

"Well, my dear, I hardly like to tell you. The fact is, there's a little matter of a bill——"

"Oh, Splodgers! Splodgers!" wailed his good lady. "This comes of keeping secrets from your wife. I'm sure this friend of yours is no good."

"Ahem! He's rather a downy customer, I must admit."

"And how much does he owe you, for goodness' sake?"

"I hope to get at least fourteen pounds after he's dressed."

"Do you mean to say, Splodgers, that he's going to sleep here, when we haven't got a room in which we can stuff him?"

"The kitchen will do very well," said Splodgers, calmly.

"The kitchen!" exclaimed Mrs. S., gasping.

"Certainly, my love. Where else would you stuff a goose, and the very finest which ever came out of a club?" And Splodgers chuckled.

A. W.

The Roast Not Required.

A LADY one Christmas in a country district was once expecting some friends to their Christmas dinner, but as she had forgotten to order a roast of beef the day previous when she had been in town, she asked the postman if he would be so kind as to do so on his way through.

But what was her astonishment to hear the postman exclaiming, as he handed her a post-card:

"You needna' bother; they're not comin'."

J. E.

No Escaping it.

A POPULAR minister in Fifeshire, in the good old times, used at Christmas to be inundated with hampers filled with good things. On one occasion an enormous turkey was sent to him by the thoughtful kindness of a neighbouring farmer, but as the minister's family had provided for their Christmas dinner, the bird was sent to the market and sold.

A passer-by seeing this fine specimen of poultry, said:

"What a splendid turkey! Just the thing for the minister's Christmas dinner!"

So to the minister it was again sent.

The provident wife sent it again to the market and sold it again for a handsome sum.

Another friend, similarly struck with the splendid proportions of the turkey, purchased it and sent it to the minister. The good woman, not wishing to fly in the face of Providence, said at last.

"It's clear that Providence means us to have this turkey," and with the approbation of the family it formed part of the Christmas dinner.

D. P. R.

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His Own, After All!

It was Christmas Eve, and Simpson sat in his easy-chair, in full enjoyment of bodily health and mental tranquility. He was a connoisseur of wines, with a predilection for port, and two years before had purchased a huge cask of his favourite beverage, which, for greater security, he had placed at the end of his cellar, and had built a wall right across, thus shutting it off completely from all prying eyes.

At length he rose, dressed, and entered the dwelling of his next-door neighbour, where he was invited to spend this Christmas Eve.

"Magnificent port, Mr. Smith," he said, as he emptied his glass. "May I inquire where such rare old stuff is procurable?"

"Well, Mr. Simpson," answered the host, "I'll let you into a secret, but you mustn't tell anyone! I was making some alterations in my cellar a few months ago, and came across a cask of port, which the previous tenant had walled up, and, stupid fool! left when he vacated the house. This is some of it, but, unfortunately, we are into the last bottle, else you would have had some with you."

And Mr. Simpson's mental tranquility was sadly disturbed; but he wisely said nothing.

W. I.

He Wanted his Xmas Box.

As Mr. Squires stood on the doorstep, a seedy-looking individual, wearing a ragged suit and a red nose, came up the garden path and addressed him thus:

"Merry Christmas, guv'nor."

"Same to you, my good man," said Mr. Squires. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, guv'nor, I've called fer me Christmas box."

"Hum! I don't seem to know you. Are you the dustman?"

"No, guv'nor, I'm the bloke who were playing the cornet last Christmas, an' yer told me to take my bloomin' hook."

"Oh! you played the cornet did you!" said Mr. Squires, in a threatening voice. "And why should I give you a Christmas box, eh?"

"Becos I ain't playing it this Christmas, guv'nor."

And Mr. Squires stumped up. J. W.

That Christmas Eve!

Last Christmas Eve a friend of mine invited me home to spend Christmas with him among his domestic circle.

"Charming place," he said. "Quite in the country. You will thoroughly enjoy yourself."

On Christmas Eve the usual festivities were kept up in the city, and it was late when we left our convivial companions for our jaunt to the suburbs. By a singular coincidence the train landed us at the wrong station, and we had a long muddy midnight walk in country lanes.

At last we arrived at our destination, but were surprised to see that no midnight oil was burning.

On examining closer my friend espied a board at the gate, and with the aid of a match read thereon:

"This charming residence for sale."

Then my friend's fickle memory came back to him with full force.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed in despairing accents, "we moved to Richmond last week."

A. B.

A £10 Note for a Single Word.

This is the biggest price ever paid for literary matter. Kipling has received a shilling a word for his stories; other authors of high repute have at times received nearly as much.

But Ten Pounds for a single word—a word that is capable of being thought of by anybody—is absolutely a new record in big prices.

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THE TITLE OF A NEW PAPER

we shall publish in the early spring.

The title of this paper must be expressed in one word. The shorter, the easier, and the more expressive, the better.

It is necessary, of course, in order that you may choose the best title, for you to know something about the proposed paper.

In the first place, it will be a

FIRST-CLASS HUMOROUS PAPER.

It will be filled each week with the work of the very best humorous artists in the United Kingdom, and will, in consequence, be a week's compendium of hearty, wholesome and unrestrained laughter.

The Editor of the Big Budget is going to be responsible for the new paper, and he will offer a few more remarks for your guidance concerning it in the Century Number of the Big Budget, ready on January 3rd.

Before trying for that £10 note, therefore, it would be advisable for you to purchase this great Century Number of the "B.B." As, however, the number printed is limited, and there will be a big demand for it, you should order a copy at once.

OBTAINABLE AT ALL NEWSAGENTS, SHOPS, AND BOOKSTALLS.

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The Curate of Crimpington Skateport.

CRIMPINGTON SKATEPORT is a seaside village in the far west of England. It is situated on the north coast where the long Atlantic rollers break magnificently on stretches of gleaming sand, with a roar like distant artillery.

There is a resemblance between Skateport and a famous piece of poetical furniture, which was

> Contrived a double debt to pay,
> A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day.

For three parts of the year Skateport was a highly-favoured fishing village. For the fourth quarter it was a locally fashionable watering-place in good odour. It had a funny little stone pier, which commenced running out to sea with such stolidity, and solidity, you thought it was going right across to America, but got alarmed after about eighty yards or so, turned abruptly to the right, and presently broke off short.

The houses gathered in close round the sweep of the bay like children going to near the water's edge as they dare. The children, however, have the advantage of being able to run away if the wave breaks further than usual. The houses could not run, and consequently, especially in the winter, were often up to their knees in water.

The church, fortunately, was placed on somewhat higher ground, possibly because its tower was used as a lighthouse to guide the small fishing-fleet to port, and so escaped these inundations, which would have done it considerable damage, for it was old and very dilapidated.

The fact was the vicar had been very neglectful. It was rumoured that, like his church, he wanted a tile or so. At any rate, his bishop had suspended him for his irregularities, and no wonder; for when his lordship came over to inquire into the state of the parish he found the vicar had got out of the way and left one of the churchwardens to do the honours.

From him the bishop learnt, on asking why the bells had been removed, that the vicar had taken them down at the request of the parishioners, who complained that they made such a noise of a Sunday morning that they could not sleep. Finding that there was no Sunday School, the bishop demanded why it was closed, and was informed that the farmers had objected to it for fear the poor folk's children should get to know as much as they did.

Further questioning elicited the fact that there was but one service on Sundays, and that sermons were not the rule, but the exception, because the vicar thought one good sermon now and then was better than a lot of bad ones running. Despite the consolatory explanation of the churchwarden that when there was no sermon the more respectable members of the congregation went and had a pint and a pipe at "The Ship," the bishop was so horrified that he suspended the vicar, and hence it was that my hero became the curate of Crimpington Skateport.

Their appearance was greeted with tittering and shy glances.

The Rev. Singleton Symes, curate of Crimpington Skateport, was a mild and amiable being, not too young to be marriageable, and not too old to be susceptible of the charms of the fair sex. In fact, he might still fairly be classed among the young men who are eligible as guests at humble "Kettledrums," if one may apply the fashionable term to very unpretentious social gatherings, where the oleaginous excellence of the crumpet vies with the crisp piquancy of the sally-lunn.

To be sure, the worthy Singleton had

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but a brief season of the wild excitement adumbrated in my last paragraph. Muffins and bohea came but as oases in the sahara of his existence. It was only during the watering-place season that he carried the tea-cake round in giddy circles, or crushed cup after cup of stimulating souchong. For the other nine months he sipped his solitary sloe and nibbled his lonely toast in his own abode.

He felt the change. He missed female society. He sighed for a heart that would share his humble home, and sew on his schismatic buttons, for it was one of his peculiarities—due, perhaps, to the vigour wherewith his landlady-laundress wielded her iron—that he constantly shed those small mother-of-pearl discs as though they were intended to punctuate the affairs of life. He had never recovered the graces of his delivery from the time when, in the midst of a passionate burst of eloquence, he had cast one of the buttons of his shirt front, and it fell on the bald head of the dozing clerk, who woke up with a loud and distinctive "Amen" that brought Singleton's sermon to a premature close.

It will not, therefore, surprise my readers to learn that Singleton Symes, B.A., was on the look out for a wife. The only difficulty was that, in consequence of the tenuity of his salary, it was necessary that he should find one with a little money; and, strange to say, heiresses, and especially heiresses who would be likely to bestow their hands on middle-aged curates of not too prepossessing loveliness, were not as plentiful as periwinkles at Crimpington Skateport, even in the height of the fashionable season.

The hour came at last—and the woman. Our Singleton's waiting was rewarded, and he learnt that there was a deep truth in the assertion of his favourite poet, that

> No one is so accursed of fate,
> No one so utterly desolate;
> But some heart, though unknown,
> Responds unto his own.

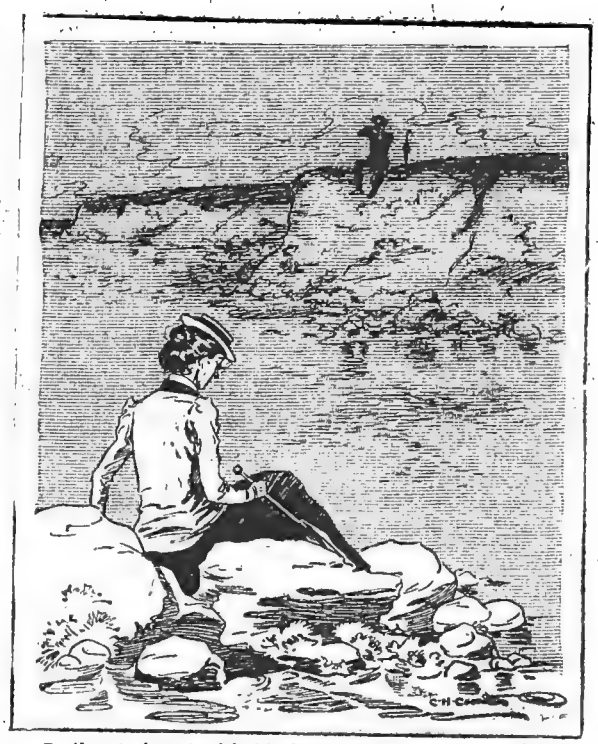
Miss Everilda Matilda Docwra came down on a visit to some friends staying at Skateport. Now Everilda was the heiress of the late Ebenezer Docwra, who had been an eminent drysalter. She was, it must be admitted, not as young as she had been, but who of us is, my brothers and sisters? At any rate, she was not too old for Singleton, and, better still, she apparently did not think he was too old for her, though their courtship was commenced by her coming to him to seek the advantage of "his larger experience and superior knowledge to a poor, ignorant girl" on some not very important theological question.

Everilda was very romantic. She quoted—and even allowed it to be whispered that she wrote—a good deal of poetry. Indeed, she blushingly admitted that some lines in her album, which were greatly admired by Singleton, were a humble effort of hers. The effort must have taxed her memory rather than her invention, for the poem began with

> The sea, the sea, the bounding sea,
> The green, the grand, the fine, the free.

Her poetical instincts and her sentiment were unfortunately backed up by an acquaintance with nature and natural phenomena, her deficiency in this respect being probably due to her long residence in Camomile Street, where the paternal business had been carried on. Under those circumstances we may fairly forgive her for asking in the autumn, of one of the fishermen's wives, "if there were any nightingales in the neighbourhood."

It so happens that the bird is unknown in the extreme west, so the woman did not understand the question. Everilda explained that she meant a kind of bird that sings during the night, whereupon she was told they swarmed up in the ivy at the abbey ruins on the cliff, and made such a noise at night that the people close by couldn't sleep for them sometimes. The woman added, however, that these birds were known in that neighbourhood by the name of "ooles" (owls).



So the swain sat with his legs dangling over the cliff, and tootled away plaintively.

But if this had been the only mistake into which Everilda fell on account of her cockney rearing it would not have been of much consequence. It was nearly leading her into a serious danger. To avoid the tittering and sly glances with which the youthful and heedless among the visitors to Skateport were wont to greet the appearance of Everilda and Singleton on the parade and sands in front of the village, the lovers were in the habit of meeting at a point some distance along the coast westward, whither Everilda would go along the sands, while Singleton took the longer and more tiring route by the cliff, in order not to attract attention to their rendezvous.

Between the village and their trysting-place there was a little bay, the headlands inclosing which ran out so far that the rising tide, soon after its turn, imprisoned any incautious wanderer between the two capes. Luckily there was a sort of rocky islet in the centre of the bay, between the headlands, which was never covered except in very rough weather and at very high tides. In this trap poor Everlida was caught one evening.

She had been late in starting for the rendezvous, and it being a fine, calm evening, had loitered somewhat on the road, so that when she reached the western-point she

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found herself cut off by the tide, and on looking back found her retreat stopped in a similar way at the other extremity of the bay.

Her alarm at first was immense. In fact it was not allayed until Singleton, growing anxious at her failing to keep tryst, and supposing she had been prevented from coming by the rise of the tide, passed by on his disconsolate road home along the cliff, and discovered her plight.

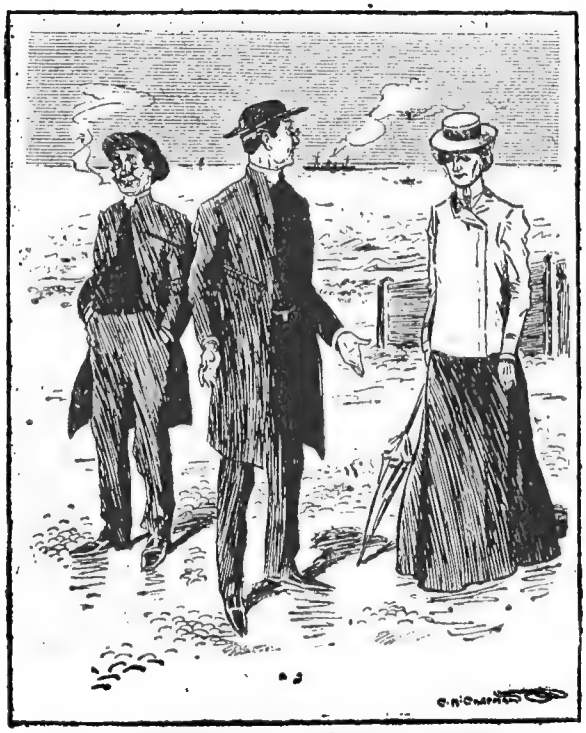
He was able to assure her there was no danger, though not without difficulty, and many relapses into want of faith on her part. He directed her to the little rocky islet, and then proposed going to Skateport and taking a boat to fetch her off. But to this she objected with tears and shrieks.

"Singleton, do not leave me! I should die if I were all alone by myself!"

He explained to her the length of time she would have to wait until the tide released her; but she declared that if he stayed near her the length of her imprisonment was nothing, but that she would expire of fright if left alone for five minutes.

"And if," she added fondly, "the tide should rise and carry me off, you will leap from the cliff and let us perish together, won't you?"

Singleton promised, but he said it was Saturday evening, and he did not see how service could be performed next day, supposing he did jump. He knew by experience the difficulty of getting a substitute in this remote part of the county. And he knew, too, what odd things arose from such substitution, for the last time he had occasion to be absent from Skateport on a Sunday, he had at the last moment prevailed on an old college friend, curate in an agricultural parish a few miles off, and that gentleman had preached a sermon, in which he described the congregation as a nest of sheepstealers, robbers, liars, and ruffians, to the intense surprise and indignation of the worthy Skateporters, until he, seeing the effect of his discourse, told them parenthetically that they must not take any notice of the sermon, which he had written for his own parish, and brought away by mistake instead of another.



The whole thing was explained in a minute.

But to return to our lovers. In as tender a strain as it was possible to maintain an affectionate conversation at the same pitch as you would hail a boat, Singleton cheered his Everilda, and she besought him not to leave her.

The evening shades gathered fast, and the increasing gloom was rapidly snatching Singleton from the anxious gaze of his love, when he fortunately remembered that he had his flute in his pocket. He at once drew it forth, and discoursed upon it such soothing airs as he could achieve without the notes to guide him. So the swain sat with his legs dangling over the cliff, and tootled away plaintively through the weary hours of darkness, while his beloved, reclining on the rock, reposed as comfortably as was compatible with the presence of multitudes of sharp-pointed limpets on her stony couch.

The tide receded at last, and at last the grey of morning creeping up the sky gave sufficient light to guide Everilda's homeward steps. Singleton, feeling somewhat hungry and flatulent after his sixtieth repetition of "The Last Rose of Summer," varied as it had been by the uncertainty about the correct notes, put his flute in his pocket, and turned his face towards Crimpington. During all the long hours of their vigil nobody—not even a coastguard—had come near them.

Of course Everilda's friends had been much alarmed about her absence and were glad to see her back in safety.

That day Everilda consented to reward her Singleton's constancy, and agreed to become his wife in a fortnight's time. Singleton could hardly read the service for agitation, and as for his sermon he made so many blunders in reading it that he enunciated about a dozen heresies without knowing it.

How bright the future looked now. The last button he was ever to shed dropped from its hold unnoticed as he strained his Everilda to his palpitating shirt-front in the first embrace permitted him as her future husband.

He found that button in his Wellington boot that night, and placed it on the mantel-piece with an air of reverence, as if it were the last offering to Venus Coelibum, or whatever deity it is that harasses single men.

Alas, the proverbial slip between cup and lip! The invariable disturbance of the course of true love could not be spared the curate of Crimpington Skateport.

On the very morning after his heart had been gladdened by the whispered consent of his blushing, if not beauteous Everilda, as he was sitting at breakfast wrapped in dreams of bliss, there came a knock at his door, which was immediately opened without waiting for a summons by a ragged and disreputable-looking figure, which brought in with it an odour of spirits and stale tobacco-smoke, as if it were the incarnation of the parlour of the pothouse.

Singleton's face fell, and so bitter was the grief and humiliation it expressed that we will, if you please, let the curtain fall, too, and begin another chapter.

Everilda was sitting on the parapet of the pier, indulging in roseate visions, when she beheld her Singleton approaching in the distance. With the

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pretty playfulness of girlhood, she hid behind the stock of an anchor. He had not seen her, and she would surprise him.

Instead of that, however, he surprised her. As he was passing the Dolphin, one of the lowest and most disreputable beershops in the village, he suddenly paused, and after looking cautiously round to see if he was observed, disappeared through the door whence proceeded loud sounds of boisterous and drunken revelry.

At first Everilda wondered, but upon reflection she began to conjecture that he had entered the house to rebuke the fishermen for their dissipation, in his character as clergyman of the place. She waited for him to come out, but he did not emerge immediately. The noise, which had somewhat abated on his entrance, soon broke out with increased loudness. At last, to her horror and shame, Everilda saw his familiar figure come staggering out at the door. He clutched at the post to steady himself, then took two steps, broke into a sort of shambling run, and fell down on his face.

Everilda fled down a by-street to conceal her humiliation and anger. She was so overcome that she could not venture back to her friends for some time. When she did she found paterfamilias looking very grave. He requested a few words with her in private, and on her acceding to his request told her it was his painful duty to inform her that, a short time before her return, the Rev. Singleton Symes had been carried past the house by some fishermen, shouting, swearing, and singing, and evidently in a dreadful state of intoxication. Miss Docwra at once related what she had seen, and on the completion of her recital was seized with a violent fit of hysterics. For the rest of the day she did not leave her room.

Next morning as she was preparing to go out to do some shopping in a small way, the door opened, and in walked the Rev. Singleton Symes, looking as fresh and clean as a new pin. The hypocrisy was too flagrant. Everilda rushed past him with averted face, and before he could recollect his sentence, paterfamilias had rushed in, and, as it were, blown him off the premises amid a whirlwind of abuse and indignation.

Singleton went home disconsolate and wrote to Everilda to ask for an explanation. His note was returned unopened. He wrote to paterfamilias, and again received back his communication, this time with a verbal message to the effect that if he did not leave off the annoyance, he should be reported to his bishop, and unfrocked! Then he broke down completely. For the next two or three days he was utterly prostrate, and did not stir out of doors.

There were not in all Crimpington and within twenty miles round it two more miserable people than Everilda Docwra and Singleton Symes.

To make matters worse Skateport began to talk, and when Skateport did begin to talk it always gave evidence of its possession of a powerful imagination for which no one would ever have given it the slightest credit. Some oozings of the truth as to the vigil of the lovers, and of Singleton's drunken fit, having trickled through the village, the most extraordinary stories were told. Singleton had decoyed Everilda to the beach and tried to run away with her to America in an open boat. He had harnessed a horse to her bathing-machine and attempted an elopement. He had offered, and been refused, and had therefore taken to drinking.

This last story gathered force in a strange way, for respectable inhabitants, who were superior to a taste for scandal, shook their heads at it and reluctantly said they had seen the curate reeling about the town after dark, though he certainly maintained an appearance of sobriety during the day.

Of course, nobody said a word to Singleton about this; but he found himself strangely avoided, and the next Sunday could not but notice a falling-off in the attendance at church. He went home, and, laying his head on his arms beside his untasted dinner, fairly wept.

"My fate! my cruel fate! Am I to be driven from this dear spot, too? Must I leave the place where my heart is planted?" sighed the curate.

That afternoon, as Everilda was stealing a mouthful of fresh air on the least-frequented portion of the beach, she saw Singleton approaching. There was no shelter at hand, no means of avoiding him. She must do that which is so painful to every well-regulated mind, even when it is absolutely necessary—she must give him the cut direct. He looked at her pleadingly, imploringly, but her eyes were stoney, and fixed. He shed a tear and a wrist-button—in vain!

She had barely passed him six steps when behold, from behind a boat lying beached close by, arose another Singleton Symes—a blear-eyed, red-nosed, dirty and unkempt double of the curate.

She screamed. Singleton rushed back, spoke a few hasty and angry words in his wrath, and then—well then all was over. The whole thing was explained in a minute. The double was his disreputable, drunken brother, who was always hunting the poor curate down, however often he changed his parish. He came ragged and penniless, and simple Singleton had given him his second best suit of clothes and all the money he could spare.

The scapegrace then promised to quit the place, but Singleton, as he passed the Dolphin, had recognised his voice, and had gone in and insisted on his leaving. Had Everilda fled less precipitately she would have seen the curate come out, after having stayed a minute to caution the landlord of the Dolphin about the irregularities he allowed in his house.

But the reprobate knew better than to leave his brother's neighbourhood. He hung about it still, only appearing at dusk, and his sudden appearance from behind the boat, where he had been basking in the sun, meant another raid upon Singleton's slender purse.

It was all cleared up now, and in another week Singleton and his Everilda were married. And the first use she made of her position as a wife was to give her disreputable brother-in-law a free passage to Australia, with a bonus of fifty pounds, deposited with the captain, and not to be given to him till after the ship had sailed.

That was the last of him—and this is the last of our curate of Crimpington Skateport. That cure is now in the charge of the Rev. Diogenes Bilberry, of St. Bridget's College, Cambridge. But elsewhere in the "Clergy List," to which I am indebted for the last bit of information, you will find that the Rev. Singleton Symes, M.A., is vicar of Pippinston-cum-Cheeseby, value £700.

And if you read the most interesting portion of THE TIMES, you will no doubt have noticed announcements to the effect that the wife of the vicar of Pippinston-cum-Cheeseby has presented a son and heir to the ex-curate of Crimpington Skateport.

HERBERT ANGELL.

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JOHN MURGATROYD'S AWAKENING.

At the news that John Murgatroyd had married, all the world wondered—that is, all John Murgatroyd's world — the world of finance, of the Stock Exchange. And when it was discovered that Mrs. Murgatroyd had been an actress, and was, moreover, twenty years younger than her husband, who was forty-five, the world wondered still more.

For John Murgatroyd was such a practical man, and the pretty butterfly which had fluttered from its most impractical calling into the stockbroker's life, could be of no assistance to him therein, that is to say, from John Murgatroyd's own point of view.

Those who had seen Mrs. Murgatroyd described her as a golden-haired, blue-eyed, fascinating little fairy, with all the vivacity of her calling, and with a taste for dainty confections in the way of dress. That was immediately after her marriage. Others who saw her later spoke of her with less enthusiasm.

She was certainly golden-haired, they said, but instead of that hair hanging in clustering ringlets about her forehead it was unbecomingly dressed and brushed straight back from her face. Her eyes were blue, but they lacked warmth and animation, while her manner was subdued and without charm.

To John Murgatroyd was due the metamorphosis. Though a fit of midsummer madness—one of those lapses which even the most practical men get at times—had caused him to make the pretty actress his wife, in the stockbroker's utilitarian career the beautiful held no place.

He had never yet awakened to its necessity. Creatures only made to flutter in the sunshine, to gladden the eye and refresh the senses, were mere drones in the world's hives. John would have none of them. So ere the honeymoon was well over, he proceeded to change his butterfly into a bee, forgetting always that the bee might have a sting.

Elaine—that was Mrs. Murgatroyd's name—rebelled for a time, then gradually the petrifying process of the stockbroker's system seemed to have its effect. One by one the little arts which she had adopted to make the home beautiful were discontinued, and instead of sitting down to the piano of an evening and endeavouring by song and music to soothe him into forgetfulness of the friction between the nations, the wars and the rumours of wars, and such kindred matters which swing the pendulum of the speculator's hopes and fears, she seemed content to spend the time over his books, puzzling her poor little head with figures and similar duties, which well might have been left to others.

Strange to say, when the metamorphosis was complete, and Elaine had become as undemonstrative and apparently as practical as himself, John was not altogether as pleased with his handiwork as he had anticipated. He would not have admitted the fact for the world. That he had so effectually moulded her nature to his own was pleasing to his vanity, but deep down in his heart there was a feeling of dissatisfaction, why or with whom he was not yet sure.

Clearer ideas upon the subject came to him in time, and for them the trouble in the Far East was accountable. Certain Chinese railway stocks in which he was largely interested suddenly went down with a run. When the International forces had crushed the Boxers and reduced the country once more to order, John thought they would right themselves. In the meantime he had determined to hold on.

As a consequence, for some time money would be very "tight" with him, so "tight" indeed that it would need every penny he could scrape together to tide him over the present crisis.

One evening on his arrival home he mentioned the matter to Elaine.

"So you see we must cut down expenses in every possible way," he concluded, "and as you have plenty of leisure during the day don't you think we could dispense with one of the servants?"

Mrs. Murgatroyd gave rather a bitter smile. For a long time past she had been practically doing work which would have kept a secretary fairly well employed. Still, she did not remind him of the fact, but replied calmly:

"By dismissing a servant the actual saving would be slight, and although I am quite willing to take on the extra work, I think I can suggest a better course."

"What is it?" he asked dubiously. There was something in his wife's manner which made him uneasy.

"Oh, it is perfectly practical," with the slightest suspicion of a sneer in her tones. "This morning I received a letter from Florence Cabourne. You remember her; she was the leading lady who succeeded me in the company in which I was playing when we first met."

Mr. Murgatroyd nodded.

"Well, she has been in the company ever since, but

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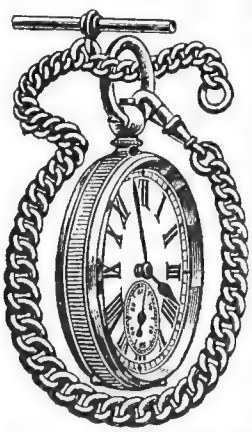

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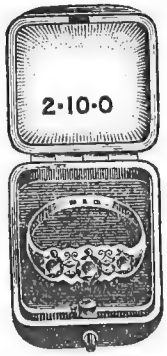

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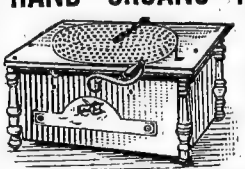

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now writes to say she is relinquishing the engagement, which is rather a good one, as you know. What do you say to my applying for it?"

The stockbroker's face fell. The idea of his wife returning to the profession, with all the temptations connected therewith, filled him with dismay. Still, as a practical man, with a reputation as such to keep up, he could not give voice to it. The salary she had received had been a considerable one, and Elaine was quite as capable of looking after herself now as before, so after a pause, in which unknown to himself she had been watching him closely, he said:

"Although, as you know, I strongly disapprove of your late profession, yet, as the money would be extremely useful just now, it would be absurd to let any personal prejudice stand in the way."

Her eyes flashed.

"Then I may offer myself for the engagement?"

"You may," he said.

The application for the coming vacancy proved successful. "Miss Elaine Trelawny," as she would appear on the bills and programmes, had been a very clever actress, and her old manager was only too pleased to have her back. So it came about that shortly John Murgatroyd resumed his bachelor existence.

The stockbroker never paid money without taking care that he received value in full, consequently his personal comfort was as well looked after and the household duties as well performed as before his wife went away, yet he missed her at every turn.

The house, too, of whose solid, unadorned comfort he had been rather proud, seemed suddenly to have acquired both emptiness and ugliness. So one day, when stocks had taken a favourable turn, he astonished his servants by the introduction of a cartload of artistic furniture, while the piano, which was of ancient make and doubtful tone, was exchanged for a dainty instrument befitting a lady's boudoir.

Even there he did not stop. Other changes equally startling followed. A conservatory was built out from the drawing-room. The monotonous stretch of greensward in front of the house was cut up into flower-beds, and rare and beautiful flowers set therein.

Why he did all this was as inexplicable to John himself as to others. The old lamps were growing dim, but his eyes were not yet accustomed to the brighter radiance of the new. Only vaguely he was beginning to realise that life might hold other interests, other pleasures than in watching the rise and fall of the money market. In the interim, mechanically almost but with a growing pleasure in the doing, he went on beautifying his home. When he had finished he wrote for Elaine to return. Two days later her answer came.

"You ask me to come back to you," she wrote. "Being a practical man, you will forgive me if I decline. When I married you I was young and romantic, and in spite of my calling, which does not, perhaps, foster domestic virtues, with high ideals as to a wife's duties. I am still young, but the romance is dead, killed like my ideals, by you. Before we had been married a month, to my sorrow I discovered it was not a wife you wanted, but an amanuensis. Perhaps in time I might have accepted my fate at least with resignation had you been satisfied with this, but you were not.

"I had a liking for all that was bright and beautiful in life. That was in your eyes a sin, one to be remorselessly purged away. Existence for me must be made as sordid as your own, and yours is very sordid, John. I was, as I have said, romantic; so much so that for a time it even covered your faults with a cloak of love. You taught me that this was folly, that in real life there was no romance. To be brief, you made me as matter-of-fact as yourself.

"Now mark the result. In this company there is a gentleman—a young fellow—much about the same age as myself, good-looking, clever, with tastes similar to my own, and one who, moreover, loves me to distraction. He has been offered an extremely remunerative engagement abroad, which offer will be made a joint one if he has a wife. He has asked me to accompany him, to enable him in fact to say, 'Give me a joint engagement.' After the training I have received from you, to look at all things from a purely practical point of view, can you blame me if I have said 'Yes?' You cannot."

That was all she said. There was no word of regret, no farewell.

John Murgatroyd dropped the letter to the ground with a groan, and as the sheet of perfumed paper fluttered earthwards the scales fell from his eyes. He had changed his butterfly into a bee—for what? Only that it might turn and sting him; and, worse than all, it was the butterfly which he had loved. The letter had reached him by the morning's post. Evening came and found him still shut up with it in his study.

For the first time for twenty-five years, Sundays and holidays excepted, he had not visited his office. Messages, telegraphic and verbal, had come to him requiring immediate attention, but like one in a dream he had sat hour after hour thinking, reflecting, regretting. Towards night out of the chaos of his mind a resolve shaped itself. He would go to the town where she was and try to persuade her to alter her determination.

The decision, once formed, he proceeded with feverish haste to put it into excution, and cramming a few things into a bag, he hurried out of the house. He was crossing the lawn when in the uncertain light he came in contact with someone coming from the opposite direction, someone who uttered a little shriek of alarm, and the next moment was folded in his arms.

"Elaine! Elaine! Is it you?" he cried.

The little figure, which he was clasping tightly to his breast, made no effort to extricate itself.

"You would not think of acting like this to anyone else, I should think, John. But," noticing his bag, "where were you going?"

"I was going to you."

"Why?"

"Need you ask? I was going to beg of you to forgive me—to come home. But you," uneasily, "why have you come, after——"

"After what I said in my letter?" A smile played about her lips. "It's a woman's privilege to change her mind, John."

"Then you have changed it?" he cried eagerly.

"Not so fast, John. I'm not sure that you will wish me to stop when you know all."

"What do you mean?" keen anxiety in his tones.

"I mean that I've deceived you all along. I pretended that I had lost all my romance, all my ideals, and become practical and horrid generally. But you've not altered me a bit, John, and when I pretended you had it was just a ruse, like my letter, to alter you, for you need it sadly. Now, do you want me to stay?"

"More than ever, my darling," he cried passionately. "I never knew how dull and dreary my life was till you showed me what it might have been."

"What it will be, John," she corrected softly.

Hubert Bartlett.

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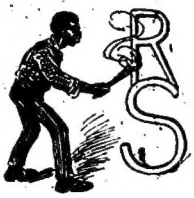

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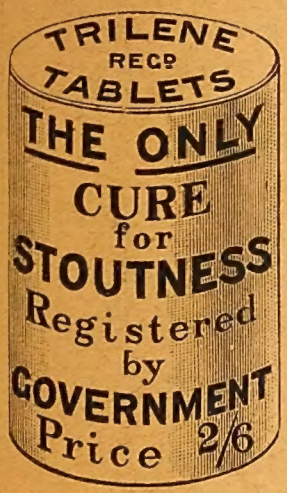

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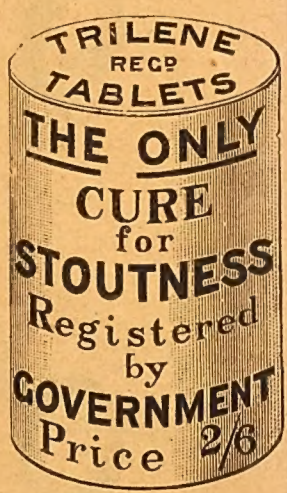
Send **2s. 6d.** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.
Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.
"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.
"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."
West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. McLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced t is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

MRS. H. COX, 23 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

MRS E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since. Send me a box for my mother."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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INDIGESTION, although the most common, is possibly the most distressing ailment that affects humanity.

9 PEOPLE out of every ten suffer from it in its protean forms: Sick Headache, Biliousness, Flatulence, Palpitation of the Heart, Coated Tongue, Nervousness, etc., at different periods of their life.

OF the many remedies that have been introduced during the last fifty years, none have been found to effect such permanent cures as

BEECHAM'S PILLS.

1 DOSE affords relief, and one friend tells another, that Beecham's Pills are really "Worth a Guinea a Box."

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